



Sutra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom

An essential explanation

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Sūtra on the heart of
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This book is set in Times New Roman

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Dharma Master Binzong

Despite the important role Dharma Master Binzong (1911-1958) played in the development of Tiantai Buddhism in Taiwan, not much is known about his life. Some insight into his life and work is owed to the posthumous biography written by his disciple Zheng Kunren¹ and numerous later essays by Taiwanese scholars of ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ and the history of modern Buddhism in Taiwan. The following brief biographical sketch is derived after a contemporary study written by Huang Ho-Jen (2017, 61-92).

Dharma Master Binzong (Binzong fashi 斌宗法師) was born in the small town of Lukang in western Taiwan in 1911. His lay name was Shi Nenggong 施能工. As an avid student of the classics, he was able to compose traditional Chinese poetry at the age of 12. Writing poetry became one of his main passions, which he cultivated for the rest of his life. When he turned 14, he began reading Buddhist scriptures, which led to a profound interest in monastic life, and changed the course of his life. A short time later, he asked his father for permission to leave home and become a monk. While his parents initially opposed the idea, Nenggong began regularly visiting the local Fayun Temple. In spring, he ran away from this home to visit the Vajra temple at Mount Shitou, where he was admitted into the monastery by the renowned monk Miaochan 妙禪 (1886-1965), who shaved his young apprentice’s head and named him Binzong 斌宗. Soon after his initiation, he started visiting other temples in Taiwan, where he obtained his formative training in Buddhist scriptures. At the age of 17, he decided to settle in Bianfeng near Taichung, where he lived in seclusion and devoted himself to studying the *Lotus-* and *Śūraṅgama-sūtras*. After seven years of reclusive studies and contemplation, he decided to resume his travels and seek

¹ Zheng Kunren 鄭焜仁 [undated] wrote a short text entitled ‘A brief biography of the Venerable Master Bizong’ (*Binzong dashi lüezhuan* 斌宗大師略傳). All footnotes are supplied by the translator.

instruction from various Dharma Masters at Taiwanese Buddhist monasteries. Thus, he was first taught under the monk Xuyun 虛雲 (1840-1959) at the Yongquan monastery at Mount Gu. Soon afterwards, he visited the community of Tiantai monks at the Guanzong Lecture temple (*Guanzong jiang si* 觀宗講寺) and sought to be initiated into Tiantai doctrine. Eventually, he obtained initiation into the Tiantai by Master Baojing 寶靜 (1899-1940) and later also Master Jingquan 靜權 (1881-1960).

His life took another sudden turn when the Second Sino-Japanese war broke out in 1937. After the atmosphere of political consternations overtook all aspects of life on the island, the Japanese started to suspect the Tiantai school of dissidence, which is why many monks decided to leave the school. Eventually, in 1940, Binzong went to Japan to report to the authorities about the actual state and development of the Tiantai School in Taiwan. A few months later, he was allowed to return to Taiwan with the mission to spread the teaching more extensively amongst the island's inhabitants. With his return to Taiwan the last period of his life started. While severe health issues forced Binzong to spend long periods recuperating in monasteries, his role as a teacher became gradually more established in Taiwanese Buddhist circles. Among the first significant tasks he took over in his role as a teacher was the founding of the Fayuan temple and soon afterwards also a 'Classroom for Advanced Studies in Buddhism' was started. Later, in 1949, it was renamed the 'Southern Institute for Studies in Tiantai Buddhism,' gradually turning into one of the centres of Tiantai Buddhists in Taiwan. Subsequently, out of Binzong's endeavours yet another important institute grew, the 'Southern Tiantai Institute for Propagating the Dharma' (*Nan Tiantai hongfa yuan* 南天台弘法院) in Taipei (cf. Huang 2017, 62-3). In more than four decades of practising and studying Buddhist learning, Binzong composed several treatises about the quintessential scriptures and tenets of the Dharma, including:

The Essential explanation of the Amitābha-sūtra as spoken by the Buddha (*Fo shuo Amituo jing aoshi* 佛說阿彌陀經要釋)

The Lamp of meaning on the Śūraṅgama-sūtra (*Lengyan jing yideng* 楞嚴經義燈)

The Origins of my life and death (Woren shengsi zhi youlai 我人生死之由來)

as well as

The Heart of the perfection of wisdom -sūtra: an essential explanation (Bore boluomiduo xinjing yaoshi 般若波羅蜜多心經要釋), the translation of which is given below.

Aside from systematic treatises on Buddhist scriptures and doctrinal tenets, his disciples also recorded and collated a selection of his lectures on related topics. Finally, his poems were published in a volume entitled the *Drifting clouds anthology* (*Yunshui shicao* 雲水詩草).

Dharma Master Binzong's fruitful life concluded in February 1958 when he passed away in the Fayuan temple, which he had helped found a decade earlier. Until the present day, he remains remembered as one of the leading figures contributing to the formation of the Tiantai school and one of the most influential propagators of Buddhist teaching in modern Taiwan.

Jan Vrhovski

Foreword

Since ancient times, China has been a land of religious freedom, without a state religion. Buddhism, however, was the informal state religion. Almost every household recited this version of the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* (*Bore boluomiduo xinjing* 般若波羅蜜多心經), which was as well known amongst people as the names Amituo and Guanyin. Regardless of the differences between those who still do and those who do not believe in the two deities, the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* is cherished by most Chinese. Consequently, how could it not be claimed that Buddhism is China's invisible state religion? But why exactly do the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* and China have such great predestined links? There may be no harm in trying to further explore these questions.

Some people say that the true nature of the Chinese consists in the propensity towards esteeming written language and words, while also being very fond of remarkable theories. But no matter if we speak about literary works or language, what is most revered among the Chinese is conciseness and clarity of expression that still manages to retain an abundance of implied meaning. If this is indeed the case, aside from the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*, are there any other *sūtras* that would fit these requirements? Since this *sūtra* is very much in line with the Chinese taste,² we can understand why it has such authority. Some people further say: in every Chinese household there is Guanyin. But if we ask which is the *sūtra* of Guanyin, everyone remains gaping and speechless. It is true that the *Fahua* [*Lotus-sūtra*] 'Pumenpin' [chapter] 法華普門品 is the *sūtra* of Guanyin. Because it is too long, some people think it not convenient for recitation. In comparison, the 260-character *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*

² Even though it is clear that the author speaks about some sort of aesthetic 'taste' of the Chinese, it is not evident from the text which aspects of this *sūtra* are believed to be most in line with such taste.

is not only much simpler, but also in the opening verse already mentions ‘Guanzizai pusa 觀自在菩薩’ [Avalokiteśvara *bodhisattva*]. From this comes the universal applicability of this *sūtra*: from the mighty virtue of Avalokiteśvara *bodhisattva*. I believe that, in the past, one or two expositions have also made clear its meaning. What harm is there in conducting a discussion in line with expositions already made, without asking which one of them is correct and which is not. The universality of this *sūtra* is undeniable.

Dharma Master Hanshan remarked:

It is easy to recite a *sūtra*; it is the understanding of a *sūtra* that is difficult.

One is idling if the mouth recites without understanding.

Let me point out that, although so many can recite the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*, when it comes to understanding, it is very likely that we will not be able to find a single person in 10,000 who can grasp its content. Indeed, this is not at all strange. If I take myself as an example, I surely am a blunt root. Even though I have studied the *sūtra* for 30 or 40 years now, it is true that, when it comes only to the four verses,

se bu yi kong, kong bu yi se; se ji shi kong, kong ji shi se
色不異空，空不異色；色即是空，空即是色

I was barely able to catch some random oral remarks from my Masters which, if articulated, appear as nothing but a bad reproduction of their thoughts. But if I question my mind, I am still perplexed and lost in the clouds. Although the words which will be said about the *sūtra* may appear extremely deep, I do not genuinely comprehend the *sūtra* in my mind, but am merely following the names and ideas, trying to understand one verse after another.

If you do not believe me, take a fleeting glance at the words contained in this *sūtra* and you will know what I mean:

What are the five aggregates (*wuyun* 五蘊)?

What does it mean that everything is suffering (*yiqie ku* 一切苦)?

What are the two truths (*er di* 二諦)?

The eighteen elements (*shiba jie* 十八界)?

The twelve links of dependent origination (*shier yinyuan* 十二因緣)?

The four noble truths (*si shengdi* 四聖諦)?

The six *pāramitās* (*liu du* 六度), and so on?

If we want to thoroughly clarify any one of these terms, we will have to talk about it for many days. If a person has no training in Buddhist learning, how can they know how to explicate these words? Moreover, herein are also several methods of cultivation and practice, such as calmness and insight (*zhiguan* 止觀), the three turnings of the wheel (*sanzhuan* 參轉), reflections and so on. If one is not acquainted with the schools of Buddhism such as Chan, Yogācāra, Pure Land, and Esoteric Buddhism, one will not be able to study this *sūtra*.

Fortunately in the past, this *sūtra* was commented upon by many. Among the old commentaries, there are at least 50 that are well-known. As for contemporary commentaries, I do not know their exact number. However, if we take a closer look at them, we can discover that these commentaries and explanations do not go very deep into it, but instead *discuss* the *sūtra*'s content in an excessively detailed manner. Some have already noted that such commentaries seem to be even more difficult to understand than the original scriptures. Why do I claim this? Because the entire commentarial tradition is in Classical Chinese, which became a major barrier for contemporary readers. In the 50 years under Japanese government rule in Taiwan, Chinese literacy declined. On the other hand, after the May Fourth movement [1919], the use of traditional thread-bound books was also rejected in mainland China. It has been 30 years since vernacular literature has been promoted in China, so only a minority of those under 50 years old are still able to understand Classical Chinese well. Consequently, although so many commentaries on this *sūtra* have been written in the past, due to these difficulties, most people have no way of benefiting from them.

Dharma Master Binzong was born in Taiwan. As a distinguished figure of the Tiantai school of Buddhism, he was profoundly versed in Lotus meditation (*Fahua sanmei* 法華三昧). In his youth, he undertook travels eastward to Japan as well as westward journeys to the mainland. In his travels in pursuit of knowledge, he not only attained scholarly erudition, but also great respect in monastic practice and virtue, having nurtured a heart of compassion transcending this world, which can rarely be seen. In his life the

Venerable Master lectured at all major monasteries of the Jiangnan 江南 region. His lectures were in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha, presented in the context of the modern world, and his manner of teaching of unimpeded eloquence. Each time he delivered a lecture, he managed to stir the minds of the audience, causing them to convert to the three precious jewels. In recent years, the Master has been suffering from high blood pressure, which is why he went into seclusion to immerse himself in meditation, thus reflecting the inexhaustible willpower of a *bodhisattva*. Who would have thought that he would ultimately embrace his illness, and even after passing into seclusion would never forget his duty to deliver all sentient beings from suffering?

The present vernacular commentary on the *sūtra* was composed during his time in seclusion. Originally, the Venerable Master wrote a classical Chinese commentary on the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*, which has already garnered great nationwide acclaim. So, why does he suddenly, while forgetting his own life, give rise to such a compassionate mind and invest his life energy into this enterprise? In other words, since people who live in today's world have temperaments and aptitudes that are different from the past, it is important to deliver sentient beings from their suffering in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha. Looking at society in the current world fills one with even greater worries and concerns. For this reason, the Master could not but use skilful and expedient means to rewrite his commentaries on this *sūtra* in the vernacular language.

This task, however, is far from simple: the first challenge is posed by the terminology used in the *sūtra*, which has to be rendered into simple terms in the vernacular. If one is not capable of understanding the language, then one will soon give up the entire endeavour. The second challenge was the Venerable Master's high blood pressure. How hard must have it been for him to repeatedly use his mental capacities, every time causing his blood pressure to soar? His is indeed a model example of forgetting one's body for the Dharma. The third challenge pertains to the skilfulness in expression; it is difficult to find among students of Buddhism a person who would be able to take on this task. But the task of commenting on a *sūtra* does not completely depend on the text. If one, for example, writes a commentary without

discipline, virtue, cultivation or realisation, one will be led to expound on the teaching as a deluge of heavenly flowers and thus ever completely covering one's shoes, rendering one unable to scratch oneself at the spot where an ache is.³ It is the author's (Master Binzong's) sincere hope to have the support of all *buddhas* and all heavenly worlds in order to reach those who will read this commentary, and engage them in the hard work of reflecting, to gain the wisdom revealed in the *sūtra*, which they would put into use. This way they will receive the grace of the Buddha as well as the compassion of the venerable master Binzong.

Foreword written in the Chrysanthemum month (September) of the Renchen 壬辰 year of the Republican era (1952), by the follower of bodhisattva precepts, the disciple Li Bingnan 李炳南, in the 'Four immeasurables' study room' (Si wuliang zhai 四無量齋) in Taichung, Taiwan.

³ Here, the phrase 'deluge of heavenly flowers' (*tianhua luanzhui* 天花亂墜) has a double meaning, which can be understood only if we know the original sources of the allusion. In a Buddhist context, 'the deluge of the flowers from heaven' alludes to the moment when the Buddha attained enlightenment, which some Chinese Buddhist scriptures describe as a moment when a deluge of flowers fell from heaven and covered the ground. On the other hand, in Chinese literary language, the phrase can also be used to describe the external, aesthetic embellishment of one's expression. Combining both meanings together, we can thus understand that, when the phrase refers to an exposition on the meaning of the Dharma, the phrase 'deluge of heavenly flowers' can refer to an abundance of eloquent words and expressions, which, to an unlearned and unenlightened mind, only obscure the location of the actual 'ache' of existence. It is namely that an abundance of fragrant phrases and beautiful words about the Dharma might only cover the shoes with which one touches the ground of existence, while the aching feeling would feel as if from under a bed of roses. Aside from this, the same sentences may also contain another, less explicit meaning, which would be more clearly understandable to a speaker of Chinese, for the word *tianhua* 天花 can also mean 'smallpox.' One can imagine that shoes can be an impediment if one wants to reach the 'ache' in one's feet.

Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya-sūtra)

Translated into Chinese by
the Tang Tripiṭaka Master Xuanzang 玄奘

般若婆羅密多心經

觀自在菩薩，行深般若波羅密多時，照見五蘊皆空，度一切苦厄。舍利子！色不異空，空不異色，色即是空，空即是色；受想行識，亦復如是。舍利子！是諸法空相：不生不滅，不垢不淨，不增不減。是故空中無色，無受想行識。無眼耳鼻舌身意；無色聲香味觸法。無眼界，乃至無意識界。無無明，亦無無明盡；乃至無老死，亦無老死盡。無苦集滅道。無智，亦無得。以無所得故！菩提薩埵，依般若波羅密多故，心無罣礙，無罣礙故，無有恐怖，遠離顛倒、夢想，究竟涅槃。三世諸佛，依般若波羅密多故，得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提！故知般若波羅密多，是大神咒，是大明咒，是無上咒，是無等等咒。能除一切苦！真實不虛！故說般若波羅密多咒，即說咒曰：揭諦，揭諦，波羅揭諦，波羅僧揭諦，菩提娑婆訶！

Bore boluomiduo xin jing:

*Guanzizai pusa, xing shen boruo boluomiduo shi, zhaojian wuyun
jie kong, du yiqie ku'e. Shelizi! Se bu yi kong, kong bu yi se, se ji shi
kong, kong ji shi se; shou xiang xing shi, yi fu rushi. Shelizi! Shi zhu
fa kong xiang: bu sheng bu mie, bu gou bu jing, bu zeng bu jian.
Shigu kong zhong wu se, wu shou xiang xing shi. Wu yan er bi she
shen yi; wu se sheng xiang wei chu fa. Wu yan jie, naizhi wu yishi
jie. Wu wuming, yi wu wuming jin; naizhi wu laosi, yi wu laosi jin.
Wu ku ji mie dao. Wu zhi, yi wu de. Yi wu suode gu! Putisaduo, yi
bore boluomiduo gu, xin wu guayi, wu guayi gu, wu you kongbu,
yuanli diandao, mengxiang, jiujiang niepan. Sanshi zhu fo, yi bore
boluomiduo gu, de a'nouduoluo sanmiaosan puti! Gu zhi bore
boluomiduo, shi dashenzhou, shi damingzhou, shi wushangzhou, shi
wudengdengzhou. Neng chu yiqie ku! Zhenshi bu xu! Gu shuo bore
boluomiduo zhou, ji shuo zhou yue: Jiedi, jiedi, boluo jiedi, boluo
seng jiedi, puti suopohe!*

When the *bodhisattva* Guanyin was practising the deep perfection of wisdom, he saw clearly that the five aggregates are all empty and was thus delivered from all suffering. Śāriputra! Materiality differs not from emptiness, and emptiness differs not from materiality. Materiality is emptiness, and emptiness is materiality. Sensing, perceiving, volition, and consciousness are all like this. Śāriputra, this is the inherent emptiness of all *dharma*s: they are neither born, nor cease to be, neither defiled nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing. Therefore, the core of emptiness is materiality-lessness, where there is no sensing, perceiving, acting, cognising; no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or consciousness; no seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, or *dharma* (phenomena). Since there is no visual realm, there is no realm of consciousness even. Since there is no ignorance, there is also no ending of ignorance, until we come to the ending of old age or death. There is no suffering, arising, cessation or the path. There is no wisdom and no attainment. Because there is nothing to attain, *bodhisattvas* rely on the practice of the perfection of wisdom, so that their minds are unimpeded.

Because they are unimpeded, they know no anxiety, they keep far away from confusion (inverted beliefs) and dreamlike illusion, and in the end attain complete enlightenment. Because all *buddhas* of the three periods of time rely on the perfection of wisdom, they attain unsurpassed complete perfect awakening. Therefore, it is known that this is the great inspiring mantra, the great enlightening mantra, the unexcelled mantra, the unequalled mantra. It dispels all suffering! It is genuine and veritable, and not false! Speak, therefore, the perfection of wisdom mantra. Recite the mantra in this way: *Gate, gate, pāragate, pārasaṅgate, bodhi svāhā!*

Introduction

It is a conventional practice in explications of *sūtras*, to first provide a so-called ‘introduction’ (*xuantan* 玄談) or an ‘outline,’ such as the ‘Five-sectioned interpretation’⁴ of Tiantai, or Xianshou’s (the patriarch Fazang’s) ‘Introduction to the ten gates’ (*Shimen xuantan* 十門玄談), and others. If we regard current students of Buddhism, it seems that there is no requirement for such introductions amongst them. Because Taiwan is an isolated island located in China’s coastal area, Buddhist Dharma is in decline. There were always limited opportunities for expounding on this *sūtra*, and therefore the distinctive style⁵ of such an introduction may have not been much appreciated. For this reason, it may be useful to give the readers the following introduction.

In the context of which school of Buddhism should we explain the *sūtra*? Although I am a member of the Linji school of Chan Buddhism, I have been trained in the doctrine of the Tiantai, which is why I will now firstly speak about the five-sectioned interpretation from the Tiantai.⁶

If we regard the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* in the context of the spreading of Buddhism in China, we can probably say that it became ‘popular everywhere under heaven’ (*fengxing tianxia* 風行天下). Moreover, its reciters have been numerous and its popularity does indeed surpass those of both *Diamond-cutter-* (*Jingang* 金剛) and *Amitabha-* (*Mituo* 彌陀) -*sūtras*.

⁴ *Wuzhong xuanyi* 五重玄義 which is also translated as the ‘five categories of profound meaning.’

⁵ Master Binzhong refers most probably to the Tiantai manner of analysing the content of *sūtras* through five main categories or steps. In this way, his reference to the ‘distinctive style’ of his introduction might stem from his observation that, at the time, Tiantai Buddhism was not in vogue in Taiwan.

⁶ Binzhong: On the five-sectioned interpretation, see in the Conclusion below. Because this may prove to be too tiresome and difficult for a beginner, other editions of the *sūtras* do not include it.

Although short in length and concise in language, encompassing only around 200 characters, its meaning is still exceptionally extensive and profound. Overall, amongst an entire corpus of sacred teachings it is the most acclaimed classical scripture; it is the most compendious and essential text amongst the 600 volumes of the *Perfection of wisdom-sūtras*. It outlines and captures the essential points of other *sūtras*, which is why the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* ought to be revered.

The *sūtra* liberates all sentient beings from their confusions and pointless attachments, and enlightens them into liberation through the Dharma-gate.⁷ Since it makes everybody understand the emptiness of materiality in all its respects, it reveals the truth by dissolving layer upon layer of illusion, taking us ultimately to the comprehensive realisation of the principle of the emptiness of all *dharmas*. Beginning with the five aggregates of the sentient world, it takes us straight to the transcendental world (*chu shijian* 出世間) of nonwisdom and nonattainment. Because emptiness is so all-pervading, we do not need to grasp at appearances (*yiqie xiang* 一切相) and if we do not cling to appearances, we will be able to see the true nature of reality (*shixiang* 實相). True nature is the true mind (*zhenxin* 真心), inherent within every one of us. When we are deluded, we are called sentient beings, but when we gain awareness of the true nature, we join all the *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*. In delusion we are bound to the endless cycle of life and death, while in awakening we are finally liberated.

Wisdom (*bore* 般若) refers to unearthing the truth; it is the most refined instrument and method of liberating oneself from the cycle of rebirth. If we do not seek insight into ultimate truth, our liberation from the cycle of rebirth will not occur. However, if we do seek it, we have no other way but to aim at attaining the truth from *sūtras* and classical scriptures.

⁷ In Buddhist terminology, the term ‘Dharma-gate’ denotes the ‘method’ or ‘sequence of the doctrine.’ As such, it is used both to denote the ‘ways of teaching the Dharma’ as well as ‘Dharma discourse.’ The Chinese term means literally ‘Dharma-gate,’ *famen* 法門, while the original Sanskrit term *dharmaparyāya* is closer in meaning to ‘distinct discourse on Dharma’ (*paryāya* may also mean ‘synonym’) (see further Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 250-1).

If you aspire to study the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*, it will ultimately make a lot of sense. While, personally, I also think this can be a very exciting and happy endeavour. Enough words, now we shall proceed directly with the topic of our lessons.

The Main explanation

Our discussion will be divided into three main parts:

- A1 The title of the *sūtra*, the eight characters *Bore boluomiduo xin jing* 般若波羅蜜多心經.
- A2 The translator whose name consists of eight characters *Tangsanzang fashi Xuanzang shi* 唐三藏法師玄奘釋.
- A3 The main text, beginning with the words *Guanzizai puta* 觀自在菩薩 and ending with the words *puti suopohe* 菩提娑婆訶, altogether 260 characters.

Let us first explain the title; some people say that since the title of a *sūtra* is not a part of its main text, why explain it? Because the title represents an overall description of the whole *sūtra* it articulates a table of contents of the text. Having understood the *sūtra*'s title, we can know the main idea within it. Akin to a net which comes to be when the key links are interconnected, when the main points of the teaching are presented to them, everyone's eyes will open by themselves,⁸ as when the collar of a garment is lifted, the threads of reasoning in everyone's understanding will also be made straight.⁹ For this reason, explanation is necessary.

⁸ The original Chinese text is a bit more esoteric. In Buddhist vocabulary, the word 'net' draws its connotation from the term 'Indra's net' (*Yintuo luowang* 因陀羅網), which is used to illustrate the meaning of concepts such as emptiness, dependent origination, and interpenetration of principles. In this sense, it is a metaphor of the underlying order of the universe as well as the universally permeating principles of Dharma, in which the key-links are compared to jewels of enlightenment, within one network of the teaching.

⁹ This metaphor has a meaning similar to the one above. The straight lines in the fabric of the collar of the garment are an analogy for the network of principles which make up the net of Indra, with one minor difference: it is the pattern of principles worn personally by one person. Similarly, as in the case of Indra's net, the metaphor of a network alludes to 'straightening out' and 'connecting' all the key links in the network of the principles of reality.

A1 The Title of the *sūtra* explained

- I. Analytic explanation (*fenshi* 分釋)
- II. Synthetic explanation (*heshi* 合釋)

The text will be analysed below throughout in accordance with these two methods, regardless of the topic.

***Bore boluomiduo xin jing* 般若波羅蜜多心經**

I Analytic explanation: These eight characters summarise the topic of the entire *sūtra*:

bore boluomiduo xin jing
般若波羅蜜多心經

The first seven characters *bore boluomiduo xin* 般若波羅蜜多心 are the *sūtra*'s specific title. It is called specific because this name distinguishes this *sūtra* from others. The last character *jing* 經 is its general title, since it bears the generic name of other works, namely *sūtra*. Let us now discuss the eight-character summarising title in four parts:

- (1) *bore* 般若
- (2) *boluomiduo* 波羅蜜多
- (3) *xin* 心, and
- (4) *jing* 經.

1. *Bore* 般若: This is a Chinese version of the Sanskrit word *prajñā*, Sanskrit is an ancient Indian language, because Indians profess to be the progeny of Lord Brahma (*Fantian* 梵天),¹⁰ their language is

¹⁰ Master Binzong provides the same definition as given in the *Great Buddhist dictionary* (*Foxue da cidian* 佛學大辭典) by Ding Fubao 丁福保. In the entry for the word *Fanyu* 梵語 ‘Sanskrit,’ Ding says that Sanskrit is:

called *Fanyu* 梵語, which translates to ‘wisdom’ (*zhihui* 智慧). But why don’t we directly translate it instead of keeping the Sanskrit word (though pronouncing it in a different manner) *bore* 般若 (Sanskrit *prajñā*)?¹¹ The reason is that in China we do not have a corresponding word; even though we paraphrase it as ‘wisdom’ (*zhihui* 智慧), this is still not entirely correct. *The treatise of wisdom*¹² says:

bore 般若 pins down the true nature of things, while *zhihui* 智慧 is superficial and thus unsuitable.

Because the commonly used term *zhihui* (wisdom) is inadequate to express the meaning of *bore*, and people often consider wisdom to be a synonym for intelligence, translating the Sanskrit term *prajñā* as Chinese *zhihui* would give rise to great confusion, thereby losing the distinctive and special original meaning of *bore* 般若 (*prajñā*). To preserve the distinguishing superiority of *bore*, we therefore continue using the Sanskrit word *prajñā*, pronounced in a Chinese manner as *bore*. Therefore, in the method of interpretation by five categories (*wuzhong* 五種) we do not translate words into Chinese but instead retain the original term. This is in accordance with the method of four examples (*sili* 四例), where certain terms in the *sūtras* are translated neither in their meaning nor pronunciation. The word *bore* could be translated as ‘wondrous wisdom and knowledge’ (*miao zhihui* 妙智慧) or ‘true knowledge and wondrous wisdom’ (*zhenzhi miaohui* 真智妙慧), in order to distinguish it from what people commonly refer to as wisdom (*zhihui*). Only such a translation would be precise and appropriate. Although each human being in the world has their own wisdom, people such as great

a language from the Indian subcontinent (Tianzhu 天竺), and because it was commanded by lord Brahma (Fantian 天), it is called *Fanyu* 梵語

¹¹ Taken literally, this is of course an incorrect statement. What Binzhong wanted to say is that *bore* 般若 is the transliteration of the Sanskrit word *prajñā*, while the two characters originally have no other meaning in Chinese.

¹² The whole title of the above-mentioned scripture is *The treatise of the great perfection of wisdom*, Chinese *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論.

scientists, artists, or philosophers are believed to embody the finest gems of wisdom. But if we were to regard them from the perspective of Buddhist wisdom, they are merely this-worldly philosophers of this-worldly intelligence (*shizhi biancong* 世智辯聰). Even if our science is flourishing and we have material goods and great civilization, or can produce aeroplanes and invent radio, all these are products of tainted knowledge (*louzhi* 漏知) about this world, which in the end cannot lead humans to illuminate their minds and recognize their true nature, to end their cycle of birth and death, and attain ultimate peace. Crude knowledge creates various worries and suffering as it can be used in an inappropriate manner, and create harm and bring about great disasters such as the atomic bomb. Worldly wisdom (*zhihui*) therefore combines both evil and good, it contains just as much harm as benefit. If one uses knowledge with good intentions, it is beneficial, whereas with bad intentions it harms people. Consequently, worldly wisdom is only a form of deluded understanding, perceived through the six sense doors. Such knowledge is unreal, contaminated, impure and unvirtuous, and limited. Facts can only be called information, since they do not really qualify as something which should give rise to wisdom, to say nothing about obtaining higher levels of wondrous wisdom (*miao* 妙).¹³ As for the wondrous wisdom of *prajñā* expounded in this *sūtra*, it is entirely different. It is a form of untainted wisdom (*wulouzhi* 無漏智), contained inherently within one's true nature (*zixing* 自性), which is completely revealed by the genuine mind. It eliminates flaws and cuts away errors, it is upright, pure, and uncontaminated. It is the only correct wisdom without crookedness, and it is inexhaustible. If one is capable of using it, one will not only be able to resolve one's confusions and realise the truth, but will also leave behind suffering and attain blissful peace. One will also be able to deliver other beings from suffering, leading them to overcome the

¹³ In Buddhism, the term *miao* 妙 is used to describe 'mystical' or 'wondrous' levels of existence, which is semiotically motivated after the idea of the mystical as infinitesimal or too small to be seen, and thus beyond our ability to perceive it, yet at the same time having a great impact on reality.

ocean of pain which underlies the eternal cycle of life and death, to the other shore (*bi'an* 彼岸) of peace and happiness. Since such is the special nature of the wondrous wisdom of *prajñā*, then how can it be discussed on equal terms with worldly wisdom and quick-wittedness in argumentation. The same meaning is conveyed in the *Treatise of wisdom* which says:

prajñā is the most supreme of all wisdoms (*zhihui*); there is nothing above it, no other which can be compared with it, and none which can match it, and even less so a wisdom which surpasses it.

Therefore, the tarnished wisdom of this world differs as widely from the wisdom of *prajñā* in this *sūtra* as heaven does from earth.

Therefore, leaving the title untranslated is a sign of respect for its original meaning. The diagram of four examples of translating *sūtras* and five cases when we do not translate them is given below (Table 1).

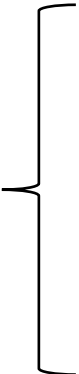
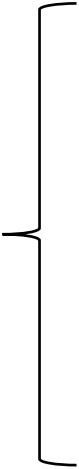
Four examples of translating the terms		1	Translating characters while leaving the word untranslated, e.g., <i>bore</i> 般若, all mantras etc.
		2	Translating words while leaving the character untranslated, the character 卍 etc.
		3	Translating both characters and words, translating <i>sūtras</i> into Chinese texts completely.
		4	Translating neither words nor characters, giving the text in the original Sanskrit form.
Five types of terms we do not translate		1	Terms not translated due to having multiple meanings, such as the Sanskrit term <i>bhagavān</i> (an honorific title of the Buddha), which contains six meanings.
		2	Terms with esoteric meanings, such as mantras.
		3	Not translating terms due to our respect for their meanings, such as <i>prajñā</i> etc.
		4	Terms traditionally transliterated, such as <i>anuttarasāṃyaksambodhi</i> etc.
		5	Because there is no correspondence for the term in the target language, we do not translate it, such as the <i>āmra</i> fruit etc.

TABLE 1: TRANSLATING TERMS

Let us now briefly explain the meaning of the wisdom (*zhìhui*) of *prajñā*: the understanding of principles and the knowledge of facts is called 智慧 *zhìhui*. *Zhi* 智 means having a thorough understanding of conditioned phenomena (*youwei zhi shixiang* 有為之事相), *hui* 慧 means having a thorough understanding of the unconditioned principle of emptiness (*wuwei zhi kongli*

無為之空理). The function of *zhi* is to illuminate and the function of *hui* is to distinguish. *Zhi* can understand all *dharmas* and *hui* can disperse confusion and make us realise the truth. Also, *zhi* illuminates the external realm and *hui* reveals the mind. The ability to penetrate through all conditioned *dharmas* of this world means that the four elements of the physical body and everything that exists outside are both subject to the dependent origination of illusory phenomena, and do not possess the real Dharma and the real self. Such an ability to understand is called *zhi*. On the other hand, to become completely enlightened about the wondrous according to which there is no difference between the mind, the Buddha, and sentient beings, and to realise the unborn and nonperishing true mind of buddha-nature which is permanently inherent within all human beings, is called *hui*. In brief, the thorough understanding of all *dharmas* that exist outside and within, while being undefiled and guiltless is what Asaṅga called the ‘wondrous wisdom of *prajñā*.’ Speaking more precisely, *prajñā* is a form of wisdom, a perfect understanding and original enlightenment (*yuanming benjue zhi* 圓明本覺智) about the nature of all *dharmas*, realised by all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*. It is also a form of pure wisdom of nondiscrimination (*qingjing wufenbie* 清淨無分別), beyond all confusions and illusions. We could also say that it is a recognition that all *dharmas*, including oneself are originally empty; this is a form of wisdom of true emptiness and formlessness (*zhenkong wuxiang* 真空無相), an insight into nonattainment. Is this something that a worldly human being can ever dream of attaining?

With regards to its characteristics, we can distinguish three kinds of *prajñā* (Table 2):

1. *Prajñā* of the true nature (*shixiang* 實相, *dharmatā*): the term ‘true nature’ means seeing (*xiang* 相) *dharmas* as they really are (*rushi* 如實), namely, that they cannot be described in terms of ‘being and nonbeing’ (*youwu* 有無),¹⁴ nor can their magnitude be counted or

¹⁴ The terms *you* 有 ‘presence’ or ‘being’ and *wu* 無 ‘absence’ (conditionally also ‘nonbeing’) are to be understood with some reservation. In both Indian (Sanskrit *bhava*) and Chinese

measured as ‘large and small’ (*daxiao* 大小). An ordinary person cannot conceive them, nor can they be described in secular language or discourse. What we call complete cessation of mental activity is beyond expression in words and cannot be attained through them. This is an incomprehensible state of existence (*jingjie* 境界). Hence, *The Lotus-sūtra* says:

The true nature of all *dharma*s can only be conveyed by a *buddha*.

There exist at least three interpretations of the meaning of true nature:

- (1) True nature is appearance-less (*wuxiang* 無相); it is outside fabricated appearances (*xiang* 相), there is no other appearance that can be attained which is why we speak about appearance-less-ness.
- (2) True nature is lacking appearance; not even one *dharma* is without the appearance of achievements or virtues as numerous as the grains of sands in the river [Ganges], which is why we say that none of them is without appearance.
- (3) True nature is without appearance and not lacking appearance. Although it is separate from (*li* 離) appearance, its intrinsic substance (*benti* 本體) is not empty.

Although it is accomplished, its self-nature is still originally quiescent. True emptiness does not hinder wondrous existence,¹⁵ and wondrous existence does not obstruct true emptiness. If we speak about the existence of true nature, then wondrous existence has no existence. If we speak about its emptiness, true emptiness is not empty. Transcending all appearance and transcending all *dharma*s is

Buddhist context the terms are to be understood in a process sense, as ‘becoming’ or ‘existence’ as a dynamic state.

¹⁵ In Buddhist vocabulary, *miaoyou* 妙有 or wondrous existence is defined as existence without existence as its elementary characteristics (*xiang* 相). In other words, it is a form of existence, which remains after the clinging to and conception of what we call existence is eliminated.

therefore said to be without appearance and not lacking appearance. This is the *prajñā* of true nature.

2. *Prajñā* of contemplation (*guanzhao* 觀照): this is a form of wisdom applied to the true nature of the substance of things (*liti* 理體). It is said that when a practitioner meditates, their mind becomes enlightened and focused, so that the meditator is able to illuminate all *dharma*s, revealing that all appearances are illusory and that their substance is empty. From the emptiness of appearances, one can see the true nature of existence (*shixiang*). To grasp the true nature of things by contemplation is thus called the *prajñā* of contemplation. Furthermore, when one understands the Dharma teaching as it really is, and experiences and practises cultivation in accordance with the principles, the meritorious deeds contained herein are called the *prajñā* of contemplation.
3. Textual *prajñā*: when intimately acquainted with the actual nature of the substance of things, all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* make use of language and writing to enlighten all sentient beings, helping them achieve awareness and understanding. This is called textual *prajñā*. In a narrow sense, it refers to the entire text of this *sūtra* as well as to the doctrine interpreted in the eight volumes of the *prajñā* treatises. Because the texts can help all beings to develop wisdom, we call them textual *prajñā*, however, without direct understanding such wisdom cannot be established. Without seeing true nature, we are unable to demonstrate it. In other words, all verbal instructions given by all *buddhas* are included within true nature. Speaking in a more general sense: it is not only the texts of the sacred scriptures, but rather all kinds of verbal transmissions, which can convey meaning and help people understand and gain awareness of wisdom. When the Buddha was still alive, the scriptures were orally transmitted, therefore the Buddhist texts use words and sentences, comprising the body of their doctrine. Moreover, even when the [Chan] patriarchs of the past taught by raising their hands and wielding fly whisks, they exemplified textual *prajñā* with the aim of enlightening people. Although there is no true teaching within words and writing, yet without them, we would have no other means of initiating contemplative practice and, in turn, grasping the true

nature of things. What is called the expedient means of not having to rely on writings and verbal explication cannot lead people to liberate themselves from their attachment to false views and realise the true nature of things. Therefore, textual *prajñā* is in fact an essential and indispensable prerequisite of Buddhist spiritual practice. All initiates into Buddhism must first listen to the sacred teaching. Only afterwards, by relying on the already known teaching can they practise genuine cultivation, attempting to attain the ultimate fruits and reap the benefits of realising the truth. It is only through learning, followed by Buddhist cultivation that the practitioner will not make mistakes.

To sum up: wisdom that stems from listening to verbal instruction or reading of *sūtras* is called textual *prajñā*. It is also called wisdom derived from listening. When one truly engages in practice, which is based on the understanding of the doctrinal principles, it is called the *prajñā* of contemplation. It is also called wisdom acquired by reflection. In pursuing one's studies, aiming to develop the *prajñā* of contemplation, one is able to break through ignorance and recognise original nature; this is then called the *prajñā* of original nature. It is also called wisdom acquired by cultivation. Numinous awareness that is not obscured and is empty of self-nature is also called *prajñā* of original nature. When a meditator engages in cultivation abiding by the principles or reason (*li* 理), their deeds correspond to their understanding, which is called the *prajñā* of contemplation. The wisdom of abiding in calmness, which arises from understanding, founded on the doctrine of the sages,¹⁶ is generally called textual *prajñā*. But if we focus our understanding only on the enlightened teaching of this *sūtra*, then textual *prajñā* refers to the understanding of the principle of the emptiness of all *dharma*s. If we engage in contemplation, based on an insight (*hui* 慧) into the emptiness of *dharma*s and nonself, this is then called the *prajñā* of contemplation. When, however, we become fully aware of

¹⁶ In the Buddhist context, the term 'sage,' written as *shengzhe* 聖者, refers to wise personae enlightened to the four noble truths.

the signlessness (*wuxiang*) of the Dharma-nature, and thus grasp the true nature of things, we are speaking about the *prajñā* of true nature (the *prajñā* of true nature is like the principles of reason (*li*), the *prajñā* of contemplation is like practice, and textual *prajñā* is like the doctrine).

Why are ‘scriptures’ and ‘contemplation’ also called *prajñā*? Scriptures are a tool for seeking enlightenment, the comprehension of the true nature of things (without texts we would not be able to give rise to contemplation), while contemplation is the practical endeavour of seeking realisation (*zheng*) of the true nature of things. Both obtained their names after their essence—true nature—which is why they are both called *prajñā*. Scriptures are a form of pursuit of the principles of truth, thus stimulating wisdom, an attempt to understand the truth. Contemplation, on the other hand, is a form of mental training, aiming to change and eliminate latent predispositions, and seeking to realise true nature. True nature (*shixiang*) is a state of embodied realisation (*tizheng* 體證)—numinous radiance and wondrous awakening, which equally embraces everything.¹⁷ In brief, the scriptures articulate understanding, contemplation aims at implementation and practice, and the true nature of things refers to embodied realisation. The first two — scriptures and contemplation — are of similar meaning, for they both belong to the *prajñā* of expedient means. The latter — the true nature of things — is the true meaning, for it constitutes ultimate *prajñā*. Aside from this, there also exists something called the *prajñā* of expedient means — thoroughly understanding all *dharma*s and conveniently using them to instruct and guide all living things. In other words: being at the stage of *bodhisattva*-hood and reaching the

¹⁷ *Lingming miaojue* 靈明妙覺. *Lingming* 靈明 ‘spiritual luminosity’ refers to spiritual intelligence which is possessed by all living beings. *Miaojue* 妙覺 is also translated as ‘wondrous awakening.’ It describes the subtlest level of enlightenment attained by the Buddha, which can in turn be used to illuminate and enlighten other beings. In the Chinese Mahāyāna the term refers to the final stage of enlightenment. The meaning of the Mahāyāna concept can be compared to the Sanskrit Buddhist terms *subuddhi*, *buddhāgrya*, and so on.

ultimate fruits of *buddha*-hood, and relieving all sentient beings from suffering in accordance with the understanding of the specific knowledge that is *prajñā* and benefiting living beings by the convenient means of the Dharma-gate, while extensively cultivating the six perfections (*pāramitās*).

Three wisdoms	Contemplation	<i>Shixing</i> 實行 True practice	Seeking realization by means of learning through experience
	True nature of things	<i>Shiti</i> 實體 True substance	What is relied on— scripture (<i>wenzi</i> 文字) What it realised— contemplation (<i>guanzhao</i> 觀照)
	Scripture	Understanding-awakening	Skilful means for delivering sentient beings
	Skilful means	<i>Saving sentient beings</i>	<i>Helping beings in accordance with their capacities</i>

TABLE 2: THREE WISDOMS (1)

These can also be understood in relation to the three virtues and the three causes of *buddha*-nature.¹⁸ Among the three virtues, the *prajñā* of the true nature of things is called the virtue of the *dharm*-body (*dharmakāya*). Among the three causes relating to *buddha*-nature it is called *buddha*-nature as direct cause [of awakening] the mind of Principle (*zhengyin lixin foxing*

¹⁸ Here, the term ‘three virtues,’ *sande* 三德, may refer to different conceptual triads associated with *buddha*-hood across different schools and traditions of Buddhism. Three virtues can thus refer to the three qualities (*guṇas*) of purity (*satva*), turbidity (*rajas*) and obscuration (*tamas*), while it can also refer to the three integral ingredients of *buddha*-nature, namely the merits of compassion, severing afflictions, and wisdom. The ‘three causes of *buddha*-nature’ or *sanyin foxing* 三因佛性 is also translated as the ‘threefold *buddha*-nature’; the three causes are, the direct (*zhengyin* 正因), the revealing (*liaoyin* 了因), and the conditional cause (*yuanyin* 緣因) of *buddha*-nature.

正因理心佛性). In the same context, the *prajñā* of contemplation is called the virtue of *prajñā*, the revelatory cause of the mind of Wisdom (*liaoyin huixin foxing* 了因慧心佛性) relating to the three causes of *buddha*-nature. Finally, textual *prajñā* is called the virtue of liberation in the three virtues and *buddha*-nature as subsidiary cause of [awakening] the mind of Goodness (*yuanyin shanxin foxing* 緣因善心佛性).

Secondly, they can also be explained in terms of the three kinds of greatness of ‘substance-appearance-function’ (*ti-xiang-yong* 體相用).¹⁹ *Prajñā* of true nature is substance (*ti* 體), for it serves as the substance of contemplation and the scriptures. *Prajñā* of contemplation is the function (*yong* 用), for it serves as the function of the true nature of things and the scriptures. Textual *prajñā* is appearance (*xiang* 相), for it serves as the appearance of the true nature of things and contemplation. The appearance of the texts is established in accordance with the substance of the true nature of things. After one comprehends the appearance conveyed by the text, the function of contemplation arises, and from the function of contemplation the substance of true nature is realised. The embodied realisation of true nature is obtained by means of contemplation. The marvellous function²⁰ of contemplation is realised by means of understanding gained through the texts. The intrinsic substance of the scriptures is the true nature of things. *Prajñā* also has three objects (*jing* 境), practices (*xing* 行), and fruits (*guo* 果). The three objects are:

all-knowledge (*yiqie zhi* 一切智)

¹⁹ The three kinds of greatness are: the greatness of essence (*tida* 體大), the greatness of attribute (*xiangda* 相大), and the greatness of function (*yongda* 用大). In Chinese, they are collectively referred to as *sanda* 三大 or *trīṇi bhūtāni* in Sanskrit. As a concept pertaining to a person’s path towards enlightenment, they represent the three attributes of the mind of innate enlightenment. Thus, the greatness of essence refers to the mind’s inherent thusness, the greatness of attributes refers to the myriad virtues inherently accessible or realisable by the mind, and the greatness of function refers to the virtuous function of attaining enlightenment.

²⁰ ‘Marvellous function’ or *miaoyong* 妙用 is usually found in Chinese Chan texts. It describes the virtuosity of the great sages in teaching others about the way of self-perfection.

adaptive wisdom of enlightenment (*dao zhong zhi* 道種智) and
omniscience of all phenomena (*yiqie zhong zhi* 一切種智).

The practices are: insight that all *dharmas* are empty (self-liberation), the cultivation of the six perfections (*pāramitās*), and all methods for liberation (liberating others). The fruits encompass three bodies and four virtues. These can be listed as follows:

Three <i>prajñās</i>	Three virtues	Three causes of <i>buddha</i> -nature
True nature (the true mind of the substance of all things)	Virtue of <i>dharma</i> -body	Direct cause of the mind as principle of <i>buddha</i> -nature ²¹
Contemplation (wisdom from contemplation and intensive practice)	Virtue of <i>prajñā</i>	Revealing cause of the mind of wisdom of <i>buddha</i> -nature ²²
Scriptures (complete canon of <i>sūtras</i>)	Virtue of liberation	The conditional cause of the mind of goodness of <i>buddha</i> -nature ²³
Contemplation	Function	The skilful use of <i>prajñā</i> , arisen from true nature revealed by the scriptures
True nature	Substance	The original substance (<i>bentī</i>) of <i>prajñā</i> , the scriptural basis for contemplation
Scriptures	Appearance	The predominant characteristic, a manifestation of true nature in contemplation

TABLE 3: THREE WISDOMS (2)

- ²¹ The Chinese original reads *zhengyin lixin foxing* 正因理心佛性. Aside from the notion of ‘direct cause,’ the meaning of this entire phrase revolves around the word *lixin* 理心, which translates as ‘mind as principle.’ The concept denotes the principle of the mind (*xin*) being absolutely universal amongst all beings. About the term *zhengyin* 正因 or ‘direct cause,’ it must be noted that it is meant to denote a ‘correct cause,’ which leads to improvement of one’s awareness.
- ²² The Chinese term used here is *liaoyin huixin foxing* 了因慧心佛性. *Huixin* 慧心 or the ‘mind of wisdom’ describes one of the ten nourishing mental states. The Sanskrit equivalent is *ājñācitta*. *Liaoyin* 了因 is also translated as awareness-cause, that is a cause which leads to awareness. Amongst the three causes of *buddha*-nature, it describes the initial, inherent cause for aspiring to attain enlightenment of a *buddha*.
- ²³ The Chinese term is *yuanyin shanxin foxing* 緣因善心佛性. The term ‘good mind’ or *shanxin* 善心 refers to consciousness based on the three wholesome roots of noncraving, nonaversion, and nondelusion. *Yuanyin* 緣因 or ‘conditional cause’ (Tiantai Buddhism) refers to attaining *buddha*-nature by means of good deeds.

Subsequently, *prajñā* in Buddhist doctrine is of two kinds, shared and nonshared. The shallow meaning expounded to the distinguished disciples of Buddhism (the *śrāvakas*), the *pratyekabuddhas*, and the *bodhisattvas* of the initial mind²⁴ is called the commonly shared *prajñā*; it is thoroughly understood and cultivated among the disciples of the Three Vehicles. The profound meaning of *prajñā*, as expounded explicitly to the higher-level *bodhisattvas* is called nonshared *prajñā*. It is only listened to and practised by *bodhisattvas* and is not shared with the distinguished disciples and *pratyekabuddhas*. If we discuss *prajñā* in the context of the four doctrines of the Tiantai school, then shared *prajñā* belongs to the common teachings (*tongjiao* 通教), while nonshared *prajñā* to the two distinctive and complete teachings (*bieyuan erjiao* 別圓二教). The contemplation on the emptiness of substance consists of complete awareness that the substances of myriad *dharma*s are empty, and that the realisation of emptiness can make one completely free from the cycle of rebirth. It is the notion of *prajñā* commonly shared amongst the Three Vehicles. Practising and fully concentrating on the three contemplations is completely understanding that the embodiments of the myriad *dharma*s are the *thusness* of the true nature of things (*zhenru shixiang* 真如實相), realising the principle of the middle path, being able to act from emptiness (entering the world from the state of liberation in order to benefit all living beings), extending liberation to all living things, and guiding the myriad deeds to make them enter the sea of wisdom. Altogether this is called the nonshared *prajñā* of *bodhisattvas*. This *sūtra* belongs to nonshared *prajñā*. It is the teaching enunciated when the *bodhisattva* Guanyin was receiving the Buddha's formidable power at the Vulture Peak assembly. This power is the subtle gate to enlightenment (Dharma-gate), which is practised by the *bodhisattvas* in the Mahāyāna tradition. It is the attainment of liberation through the wisdom of emptiness, which turns great compassion into one's expedient means. Herein lies what is called the *prajñā* of emptiness of nature and attaining *buddha*-hood through complete absorption into the extensive cultivation of all practices. The teaching on *prajñā* preached by a *buddha* for the longest period of time is the so-called

²⁴ *Chuxin pusa* 初心菩薩; *chuxin* 初心 refers to the initial stage of awareness of a *bodhisattva*. It can also be translated as an 'initial resolve,' or more generally, 'beginner's mind.'

Twenty-two years of conversations on prajñā. Altogether, there exist eight volumes of *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*. These are listed as follows:

- (1) The *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* in 100,000 verses (*Dapin bore* 大品般若).
- (2) The *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* in 25,000 verses (*Fanguang bore* 放光般若).
- (3) The *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* in 18,000 verses (*Guangzan bore* 光贊般若).
- (4) The *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* in 8,000 verses (*Daoxing bore* 道行般若).
- (5) The *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* in 4,000 verses (*Xiaopin bore* 小品般若).
- (6) The *Heavenly king's questions on prajñā-sūtra* in 2,500 verses (*Tianwang wen bore* 天王問般若).
- (7) *Mañjusri's questions on prajñā-sūtra* in 600 verses (*Weshu wen bore* 文殊問般若).
- (8) The *Diamond-sūtra* in 300 verses (*Jingang bore* 金剛般若).

Although the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* is only 200 characters long, it represents the essence and purposes of the majority of the other *sūtras*.

As regards methods of elaboration and cultivation of the wisdom of *prajñā*, each school has its respective distinguishing characteristics. In the Tiantai school, for example, such a method is based on the three wisdoms (*sanzhi* 三智). What are these? They are: all-knowledge (*yiqie zhi* 一切智), adaptive wisdom of enlightenment (*daozhong zhi* 道種智), and omniscience of all phenomena (*yiqiezhong zhi* 一切種智).

‘All-knowledge’ is the complete realisation that all *dharma*s are empty in nature. It is the wisdom of emptiness-only, realised by the distinguished disciples of the Buddha and the *pratyekabuddhas*. The ‘adaptive wisdom of enlightenment’ is a comprehensive grasp of all methods applied to attain

enlightenment and used in order to guide all sentient beings to liberation. This is when the wisdom realised by a *bodhisattva* enables them to enter into provisional activities²⁵ to guide others and lead them to liberation (*huadao* 化導). The ‘omniscience of all phenomena’ is a comprehensive knowledge of all the methods to completely extinguish all mental defilements, along with all their inherent attributes, activities and principles, impurities and purities, and all *karma* of the ten Dharma-realms. This is the supreme enlightenment of perfected *prajñā*, realised by all *buddhas*. It is also said that knowing the emptiness of substance (*benti*) is called the ‘all-knowledge,’ and knowing the temporality of all phenomena is called the ‘adaptive wisdom of enlightenment,’ and knowing the principle that phenomena constitute the true nature of the middle way²⁶ is called the ‘omniscience of all phenomena.’ What this *sūtra* illuminates is all-knowledge and the adaptive wisdom of enlightenment, but not omniscience of all phenomena. It therefore says that:

bodhisattvas rely on the practice of the perfection of wisdom ... and in the end attain complete enlightenment. Because all *buddhas* of the three times rely on the perfection of wisdom, they have attained unsurpassed, complete, and perfect awakening.

As regards the method of cultivation and realisation, it will be treated and explained below.

Secondly, the Consciousness Only school presents four kinds of wisdom (*zhi*). Now, what are these four wisdoms? They are:

- (1) ‘The wisdom of perfect conduct’ (*cheng suozuo zhi* 成所作智, i.e., the accomplishment of the wisdom of the subtle *karma*²⁷ of self-

²⁵ *Chu jiaxing* 出假行, translated as ‘entering into provisional activities’ describes the *bodhisattva*’s capacity to re-enter time and space, or the phenomenal world, to deliver all living beings from suffering.

²⁶ *Zhongdao shixiang* 中道實相 denotes the principle that the true nature of things is underpinned by the middle path.

²⁷ The term ‘subtle *karma*’ or *miaoye* 妙業 is a term commonly encountered in East Asian schools of Buddhism. According to my understanding, the word ‘subtle’ denotes that the enlightened endeavour of selfliberation and liberating others constitutes a deeper level of karmic existence. As far as the attainment of wisdom is concerned, a ‘subtle *karma*’ would be a form of *karma* at more advanced levels of wisdom. The fact that there is still mention

liberation and of liberating others) is a form of wisdom obtained by the practitioner at the moment when the five kinds of mental defilements are transformed into the state that is free from passion or delusion (*anāsrava*). This wisdom which manifests spiritual powers of transformation, and the power of the original vow of the *bodhisattva* also benefits all sentient beings. This is called the wisdom of perfect conduct' — the remarkable abilities of the last incarnation of the Tathāgata manifest the results of such wisdom.

(2) The 'wisdom of profound insight' (*miao guan cha zhi* 妙觀察智) is the profound understanding of all *dharma*s; it is the wisdom which mirrors and expounds the Buddhadharmā. It is a form of wisdom obtained when the mind becomes undefiled. Consequently, one develops profound insight into the characteristics of all *dharma*s and becomes able to explain the profound teaching to all living beings with what is opportune and suitable.²⁸

(3) The 'wisdom of universal equality' (*ping deng xing zhi* 平等性智) is the wisdom of being able to universally benefit all living beings, and views all *dharma*s as equal. This wisdom is obtained when one transforms the defilements of the mind, eliminates the idea (*xiang*) of the difference between self and others and realises the principle of equality of self and others. Consequently, one develops the ability to practise the great compassion of the unified body (*tong ti da ci* 同體大慈), a great compassion which lacks any karmic causation, and can thus liberate all sentient beings.

(4) The 'perfect mirror-like wisdom' (*dayuan jing zhi* 大圓鏡智) transforms the clinging to karmic retributions of good and evil, and manifests the state of boundless virtues and solemnity. This kind of wisdom is attained when the defilements of the eight consciousnesses are transformed into the state without passion or delusion. At this stage, all defilements and taints are completely

of 'karma' probably stems from the intention to emphasise that all levels of attainment below *buddha*-hood still take place within some form of karmic existence.

²⁸ Here, the words 'opportune and suitable' (*jiyi* 機宜) relate to adapting the manner of one's teaching to the capacity of a sentient being. In other words, to teach in accordance with the cognitive capabilities of the listeners.

eliminated, causing the true nature of things (*shixiang*) to emerge in all its clarity, so that all *dharmas* of being and nonbeing of the Dharma-realms become completely integrated, without any obstruction. At this stage, one resembles a great mirror shining upon and illuminating the ten directions with perfect brightness, enshrouding all manifestations of nature, leaving nothing unilluminated and no detail unexposed. The defiled bodies and lands (*shentu* 身土)²⁹ are turned into the bodies and lands of genuine untaintedness and solemnity. It is a state, possessing all achievements and virtues, resembling a great mirror, in which all forms and appearances are reflected as they are. We are therefore speaking about perfect mirror-like wisdom. The perfect mirror-like wisdom is the *dharma*-body (*dharmakāya*), it is the *prajñā* of the true nature of things. The wisdom of universal equality is the reward body (*baoshen* 報身),³⁰ it is the *prajñā* of contemplation. In turn, the wisdom of profound insight and the wisdom of perfect conduct are the transformation body (*nirmāṇakāya*), they are textual *prajñā*.

We have so far discussed the principles of transforming consciousness into wisdom. Consciousness contains distinctions which can give rise to impurities and defilements. Wisdom, on the other hand, has no such distinctions. It belongs to the state which is uncontaminated, purified of defiling illusions. In brief, consciousness is the mind of delusion and confusion used by an ordinary person, while wisdom, on the other hand, is the nature of perfection and wondrous awakening realised by the sages. Transforming consciousness into wisdom is thus the same as transforming the mind with distinction into the mind without distinctions. It is transforming a polluted mind into a purified mind, defilements into undefiled

²⁹ The term *shentu* 身土 or ‘bodies and lands’ refers to all forms of bodily manifestations and the realms in which they appear. However, in a more superlative sense, it can also refer to *buddha*-bodies and *buddha*-lands. In this latter case, less emphasis is placed on eradicating defilements.

³⁰ The ‘reward body,’ *baoshen* 報身, is also referred to as the body of bliss, or body of recompense. In Sanskrit the latter is called *sambhogakāya*, which is also the closest of the established Sanskrit notions to the Chinese translation. In the Amitābha school, the eponymous *buddha*-ideal is regarded as ‘reward-body-*buddha*.’

states, and defilements and impurities into the perfection of wondrous awakening. It also means transforming confusion into realisation, eliminating falsehoods to illuminate the true, and transforming an ordinary person into a sage. Transforming the first five consciousnesses, which encompass the fetters in relation to the objects of the senses,³¹ is called ‘the wisdom of perfect conduct.’ Transforming the sixth consciousness, which contains delusions and distinctions, is the ‘wisdom of profound insight.’ What transforms the seventh consciousness, which clings to the distinction between self and other, is called the ‘wisdom of universal equality.’³² The wisdom transforming the eighth consciousness of clinging to all dharmic seeds is called ‘perfect mirror-like wisdom.’³³ In summary, one’s attachment to differentiating between things is called consciousness, which is an attribute of an ordinary person. Having no attachment to differentiation is called wisdom, which is an attribute of *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*.

Our ability to see all *dharmas* as empty means to be grounded in the *prajñā* of contemplation, transcending all appearances; it means transforming consciousness into wisdom which enables ordinary people to become sages.

We have devoted much discussion to explain the word *prajñā*. Now, allow me to ask you the question, what exactly is this *prajñā*? The three *prajñās* have the true nature of things as their substance. The *prajñā* of true nature is our genuine mind of perfect and eternal enlightenment. Originally, this mind does not have any worries about life and death, but still contains innate ignorance. When such a mind arises along with illusory phenomena, they mutually permeate each other, so that sight, hearing, awareness, and knowing appear in the realm of the six sense objects, causing the mind to become infatuated with attachment. It thus mistakenly clings to these fabricated appearances, regarding them as true *dharmas* and true existence. Because one delusion is followed by another, confusion passes from one person to another, and results in a multitude of karmic deeds, to such an extent that

³¹ Here Master Binzong uses the expression *dui jing zhang'ai* 對境障礙, which can roughly be translated as ‘fetters arising along with the objects of human senses.’

³² I.e., realising the equal nature of all *dharmas*.

³³ I.e., illuminating the myriad appearances of *dharma* realms.

everyone suffers the hardships of the cycle of life and death, which has been going on without ever reaching its end. This indeed is a great pity.

What we can do is to cultivate and strive to realise wisdom by grounding ourselves in the subtle Dharma-gate (*weimiao famen* 微妙法門) of this *prajñā*. We can begin with contemplation of the scriptures. If we are truly diligent, we will be able to behold and clearly understand wisdom, penetrate through the illusory nature of all *dharmas*, accept that all substances are empty, and realise that not even one *dharma* can be obtained. Then, the wisdom light of ours will shine on its own, the true mind will appear, which will immediately dispel all confused emotions and false perceptions (*xiang*). This is the state of intimate realisation of the *prajñā* of the true nature of things. However, at this moment, are there still any anxieties about life and death that we can speak about? Very much so. But by the meritorious power of *prajñā* humans can completely stop suffering and completely and forever end the cycle of rebirth. By doing so, one can truly transcend the sea of pain and suffering and ascend the other shore. Indeed:

On the torrential waters of the sea of suffering, *prajñā* serves as a raft; and in the darkness of the great night, *prajñā* is a shining lamp. Allow me to present an analogy, if *prajñā* is compared to an electric light, our anxieties are the darkness, and the real nature of things is like a vessel, which can be illuminated and beheld by using *prajñā*. Then, all one's troubles will cease as the true nature emerges in the light. It is exactly like the darkness being dispelled and objects emerging when a ray of light comes out from an electric lamp. Such are the thoughts of a wise man.

The wish to know those three kinds of *prajñā* is already entirely contained in every individual's mind. The *prajñā* of the true nature of things is the intrinsic nature of the mind (the self-attained part). The *prajñā* of contemplation is the wondrous function of the mind (the perceiving part). Textual *prajñā* is the mind's predominant characteristics (the characteristics part). These three are all contained within the mind.

It is one and it is three, the three are one and never two.

This can indeed be called extremely marvellous. This kind of profound principle can be compared to a mirror: mercury and silver are the mirror's substances, which are akin to the *prajñā* of true nature. 'Reflecting' is the

mirror's function, which is akin to the *prajñā* of contemplation. 'Light ray' is the mirror's manner of appearance — which is akin to textual *prajñā*. All these aspects take place within one mirror, in which the three are contained in their entirety and cannot be separated from each other. These three *prajñās* are all contained within a single moment of the mind, which is why I do not need to seek and pursue them on the outside. I need only a flash of lucidity in one single mind moment to have the three of them manifest immediately before my eyes; the benefits I shall reap will be boundless. I hope that I will not miss such a moment and waste all my time in vain. The meaning of the word *prajñā* has thus been completely explained.

2. *Boluomiduo* 波羅密多 (*pāramitā*) is also a Sanskrit word, which has four meanings:

- (1) *Boluo* 波羅 is rendered as 'the other shore,' and *miduo* 密多 as 'reaching.' The word thus means 'reaching the other shore.'
- (2) The second meaning is 'the ultimate' (*duwuji* 度無極).
- (3) The third meaning is 'to go far beyond' (*yuanli* 遠離).
- (4) And the last meaning is 'the final/complete' (*jiujing* 究竟).

- (1) 'Reaching the other shore' is a metaphor: when one crosses water, one needs to board a boat or a raft to reach the other side. This is used as an analogy for all living beings' sinking (*chen* 沉) into the sea of delusions (*mi* 迷) and using *prajñā* as a raft to liberate themselves from it. 'This shore' is a metaphor for the cycle of life and death, the 'midstream' is a metaphor for troubles and anxieties, *prajñā* is a metaphor for the raft, and the 'other shore' is the metaphor for *nirvāṇa* — the meaning of *nirvāṇa* (*niepan* 涅槃) will be explained below. Living beings are confused due to their attachment based on the three mental disturbances,³⁴ which causes them to sink deeply into the sea of suffering, into the continuous cycle of life and death. Now, if

³⁴ Chinese *sanhuo* 三惑, the three mental disturbances or afflictions are craving, anger, and nescience. In this text the three mental disturbances are also referred to as three kinds of contamination (*sanlou* 三漏), usually referred to as desire, existence, and nescience.

they want to seek liberation, they have no other way but to make use of the power of *prajñā* to eliminate their troubles, break free from suffering, life and death, and reach the peaceful state of ultimate *nirvāṇa*. By mounting the raft of *prajñā* and crossing the midstream of triple affliction,³⁵ we break free from this shore of suffering and rebirth, and go straight to the other side of peaceful abiding in *nirvāṇa*. We can make another analogy: the great sea can be viewed as a metaphor for the three realms of *samsāra*, and the waters can be compared to numerous sufferings. All living beings fall into the current of rebirth, where they fully experience multiple sufferings. It thus seems that, akin to those who are suffering pain, being immersed in this great sea, the Buddha's life in this world was also permeated with pain and suffering, which resembled a great ocean of profound depth and limitless vastness. A person drowning in water requires immediate help, urgently needing a boat to ferry them across to the peaceful and steady shelter of the other shore. If we do not want to remain in the cycle of rebirth, eternally drowning in the water, we need to quickly seek liberation. It was said in the past that:

The sea of bitterness is vast, turn your head to the shore. *Prajñā* helps humans to exit the sea of suffering, and the cycle of life and death. It is a ship of great compassion, which brings them to the other shore of abiding in peace and happiness. The living beings who have not understood their innate nature and are immersed in the sea of suffering, of life and death, will gain understanding by relying on the teaching of *prajñā*, the innate true mind and free themselves from worldly troubles. Staying on a ferry keeps us out of the sea of suffering and brings us to the other shore. In short, the other shore refers to the ability to break

³⁵ In certain respects the term *sanzhong fannao* 三種煩惱 overlaps with *sanhuo* or the 'three mental afflictions.' While in Chinese the term *fannao* is generally used to mean 'worries, anxieties,' in Buddhist terminology it has a wide spectrum of synonyms, which all revolve around the general meaning of mental 'afflictions' or 'defilements,' Sanskrit *kleśa* or *saṃkleśa*. In Buddhist texts the characters *sanzhong* 三重 are used to mean 'threefold, triple' or similar.

away from suffering, end the cycle of life and death, and realise *nirvāṇa*. This shore is the place where all beings suffer hardships and generate *karma*, while the other shore is the realm where all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* reach complete liberation. *Bodhisattvas* use the wisdom of the emptiness of *dharmas* to board the boat of signlessness (*wuxiang* 無相), to cross over from this bank of life and death to the other shore of *nirvāṇa*. The great vow and great compassion of the *bodhisattva* not only aims at self-liberation, but also endeavours to completely liberate all beings in order to make them transcend the sea of suffering and reach the other shore together. In this way, everyone must immediately start seeking liberation.

- (2) ‘The ultimate’ is when one is able to cultivate in accordance with *prajñā* so that the two kinds of *saṃsāra*³⁶ and all sufferings can be overcome without remainder.
- (3) ‘To go far beyond’ is the ability to use the *prajñā* of contemplation; this is the ability to go far beyond all confusions and delusions.
- (4) ‘The final/complete’ refers to a state in which a *bodhisattva* accords with this *prajñā* to perfectly accomplish all the achievements and virtues of their own self-liberation (upwards seeking the way to *buddha*-hood) and liberation of others (downwards helping all living beings). Therefore, it is called ‘final.’ This refers to the ultimate meaning of all *dharmas*, referring to cultivation according to *thusness*, and hence being able to completely realise the three wisdoms and see into the true nature of all *dharmas*. This is the meaning of ‘the final.’ The disciples of the Two Vehicles can cross the stream of suffering, wrong views and thoughts, and transcend some parts of the sea of life and death, thus reaching partially the emptiness of the bank of *nirvāṇa*. But, because the fruits of the path of direct

³⁶ The Chinese term here is *erzhong shengsi* 二種生死, which literally translates as ‘two kinds of life and death.’ These two kinds of *saṃsāra* include the experiences of unenlightened people and enlightened people, or fragmentary and transformed *saṃsāra*, respectively.

realisation are not final, this cannot be called *pāramitā*. The word ‘final’ contains the meanings of perfect and eternal. In this world, all *dharma*s are ever changing, they keep arising and ceasing. Let us imagine, can these changing phenomena attain perfection, can they remain eternally unchanged? No, there is no possibility of the existence of something that can be called final. If we cultivate and practice in accordance with the final *prajñā*, we can completely realise the true nature of things, end the cycle of birth and death forever, and finally free ourselves from worldly troubles and attain peace and happiness. This is what really counts as final. This is why the *sūtra* speaks about complete enlightenment (*jiujing niepan* 究竟涅槃), attaining unsurpassed complete perfect awakening.

If we speak about *prajñā* and *pāramitā* conjoined, they refer to the meaning of *nirvāṇa* and ‘final and complete’: by practising cultivation in accordance with *prajñā*, we can leave the boundless sea of suffering, life and death and reach the ‘other shore’ (*nirvāṇa*) of complete liberation, which is hence called *prajñāpāramitā* — *prajñā* is the path which enables us to reach the other shore, and *pāramitā* is the other shore we reach. In addition, *prajñā* here refers to the *prajñā* of the actual nature of things. Understanding the true nature of things transcends all suffering of the cycle of life and death, which is attaining *nirvāṇa*; this is why we speak about *prajñāpāramitā*. Secondly, if we cultivate according to *thusness* as pointed out by this *sūtra*, we will be able to thoroughly realise the *prajñā* of the true nature of all things, which contains the three kinds of wisdom, namely all-knowledge, adaptive wisdom of enlightenment, and omniscience of all phenomena (i.e., the three wisdoms which are complete *prajñā*). Therefore, *prajñāpāramitā* is the finality of wisdom. Regardless of how we strive, in this world of defilements, we are not able to comprehensively discuss the word ‘final’ (*jiujing*). Only *prajñā* spoken about in this *sūtra*, which represents a pure and undefiled wisdom realised by all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, is the perfected ‘final’ and wondrous ‘wisdom’ (*zhìhui*) and can therefore be called *prajñāpāramitā*. In other words, the wisdom realised by all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* is a complete wisdom — there is no principle which is not understood, and there

is nothing that cannot be attained. Only this can be called *prajñāpāramitā*, in the above sense of finality.

We must know that the word *pāramitā*, which is added to the above word *prajñā*, illustrates that the other shore of happiness is attained only by means of wielding *prajñā*. To attain such *pāramitā* we must especially understand the finality of all things; we must thoroughly realise the true nature of things by making *prajñā* the instrument of our accomplishment. Moreover, although there are six kinds of *pāramitā*, when we designate *pāramitā* with the word *prajñā* we have thus assigned a specific meaning to the notion of *pāramitā*; in the same manner, we designate terms such as *dāna* [giving] and other aspects of *pāramitā*. These six forms of *pāramitā* correspond to the six liberations (*liudu* 六度). Because the word *pāramitā* means that one is grounded in these six methods of liberation from the sea of suffering, life and death, and thus can attain the other shore of *nirvāṇa*, we also call them the six liberations. Furthermore, these six liberations can overcome the ‘six hindrances’ (*liubi* 六蔽). Here, the character *bi* 蔽 means ‘obstacle, hindrance.’ The six kinds of hindrance can obstruct the mind and original nature, preventing them from emerging in all their clarity. The six liberations and six hindrances are correspondingly listed in the following diagram.

Six <i>pāramitā</i> s liu boluomi 六波羅蜜	<i>Pāramitā</i> of giving <i>tan buoluomi</i> 檀波羅蜜, <i>dānapāramitā</i>	Translation	Charity (<i>bushi</i> 布施, <i>dāna</i>)	Liberation (<i>du</i> 度)	Stinginess (<i>qiantan</i> 慳貪)	Six hindrances (<i>liubi</i> 六蔽)
	<i>Pāramitā</i> of morality <i>shiluo boluomi</i> 尸羅波羅蜜, <i>śīlapāramitā</i>		Morality (<i>chijie</i> 持戒, <i>śīla</i>)		Breaking moral-precepts (<i>hui fan</i> 毀犯) ³⁷	
	<i>Pāramitā</i> of forbearance <i>chanti boluomi</i> 羼提波羅蜜, <i>kṣāntipāramitā</i>		Forbearance (<i>renru</i> 忍辱, <i>kṣānti</i>)		Anger (<i>chengen</i> 瞋根) ³⁸	
	<i>Pāramitā</i> of effort <i>piliye boluomi</i> 毘梨耶波羅蜜, <i>vīryapāramitā</i>		Effort (<i>jingjin</i> 精進, <i>vīrya</i>)		Laziness (<i>xiedai</i> 懈怠)	
	<i>Pāramitā</i> of meditation <i>channa boluomi</i> 禪那波羅蜜, <i>dhyānapāramitā</i>		Meditation (<i>jinglū</i> 靜慮, <i>dhyāna</i>)		Scattered thoughts (<i>sanluan</i> 散亂) ³⁹	
	<i>Pāramitā</i> of wisdom <i>bore boluomi</i> 般若波羅蜜, <i>prajñāpāramitā</i>		Wisdom (<i>zhahui</i> 智慧, <i>prajñā</i>)		Delusion (<i>yuchi</i> 愚痴) ⁴⁰	

TABLE 4: SIX *PĀRAMITĀS*³⁷ More common translation is *pojie* 破戒.³⁸ More commonly referred to as *chenhui* 瞋恚.³⁹ Otherwise also referred to only as *luanxin* 亂心, denoting a state of confused and disorganised thinking.⁴⁰ Also just *chi* 癡 or *chixin* 癡心.

Since there are six kinds of *pāramitās* (Table 4) how is it that this *sūtra* only illuminates one kind? The reasons for that are the following:

- (1) Because *prajñā* is the right action, while the other five only assist.
- (2) Only if there is *prajñā*, can there also be *dāna* (the practice of almsgiving), morality (upholding precepts), tolerance, perseverance, and meditative concentration.
- (3) *Prajñā* is the eyes of the five perfections (*wudu* 五度), and the five perfections are what is upheld by *prajñā*. When, for example, we practise *dāna*, morality (upholding precepts), tolerance, perseverance, and meditative concentration, it is only due to having the *prajñā* of the wonderful *buddha*-wisdom which we use when observing distinctions, that we will not practise blindly. The *sūtra* says:

the five perfections (*wudu*) are like blindness and *prajñā* is like the eyes.

By practising *dāna* without *prajñā* we only attain honour in our lifetime, but later on we will have to face the remaining results of past misdeeds. When practising morality without *prajñā* we will stay only temporarily in the realm of desire but eventually fall into the realm of hell. If we live with tolerance but without *prajñā*, we live uprightly, however, our patience does not lead to complete *nirvāṇa*. Similarly, perseverance without *prajñā* brings only temporary merit. By meditating without *prajñā* we remain in the realm of materiality and cannot enter the diamond path. Practices without *prajñā* can give rise to defilements and do not result in unconditioned effects.⁴¹ Therefore, the five *pāramitās* must be supported by *prajñā*, so that the many practices can be perfected and yield the fruits of *buddha*-hood. In all other cases, they turn into defiled *dharmas*. Only the cultivation of wisdom can constitute the correct path. Only the *pāramitā* of *prajñā* can complete the remaining five perfections. *Prajñā* is the chief of all virtues, the guide of all practices, and the only conqueror amongst the *pāramitās*. Here, it needs to be further

⁴¹ Here the term *wuweiguo* 無為果 refers to ‘unconditioned effects,’ one of the five kinds of effect, *wuguo* 五果, Sanskrit *pañca phalāni*.

enunciated that we must not mistakenly maintain that it only suffices to have the perfection of *prajñā*, and that we do not need any other perfections. To think so would be a fundamental error. My real intention is to point out that *prajñā* is the pivotal one among the six. Saying that solely *prajñā* can perfect the other five perfections, does not mean that we are not required to cultivate the other five. It must also be known that *prajñā* requires the adornment of numerous practices. Without the assistance of the remaining five perfections, it is not possible to attain the fruits of *buddha*-hood contained in the three perfections and boundless virtues, while for attaining the other shore of the final *pāramitā* it is not enough to achieve the partial true wisdom of emptiness of the adherents of the Two Vehicles. Therefore, the five perfections are also indispensable conditions for attaining *buddha*-hood.

Subsequently, it must also be known that ‘attaining the other shore’ refers to cultivation and study according to *prajñā* as expounded in this *sūtra*. Such cultivation can in turn lead from this shore of life and death to the other shore of *nirvāṇa*. But we should not misinterpret *prajñā* as reaching the other shore itself. When it is said in the *sūtra* that the *bodhisattva* Guanyin practises the deep perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), this refers to already having attained the other shore.

Note: Early interpretations of this term include the concept *boluomi* 波羅密 without the character *duo* 多, while later on translations add the character *duo*. In Sanskrit, words have different forms of endings. Similarly, for example, the character *yi* 矣 is used in the classical language of the Buddhist texts, but the character *le* 了 in the vernacular. For example, we can say that the *bodhisattva* cultivates profound *prajñā*, and having completed meritorious achievements has already attained final *nirvāṇa*. This has no other meaning apart from the abovementioned one. Later, people translated this word by adding the character *duo* 多, which exhibits a more mysterious meaning. But what does this *duo* define in this regard? These words convey the idea that the *bodhisattva* Guanyin entered the universally penetrating meditation of *samādhi* through learning, reflection, and

practice. In this way, the character *duo* has no relevant importance and does not require further discussion.

This concludes the definition of the word *pāramitā*.

3. The mind (*xin* 心): there are several kinds of mind: (1) the mind of plants; (2) the corporeal mind; (3) the mind of essence; (4) the reasoning mind; (5) the mind of true *thusness* (*tathatā*).
- (1) The mind of plants (grasses, flowers, trees, and nonsentient beings) only has the function of growth and completely lacks other functions.
- (2) The corporeal mind, which belongs to living substances, namely the mind of five *zang* and six *fu* organs,⁴² only carries out the function of structure and is without any consciousness.
- (3) The mind of essence (this is an expression similar to words *zhongxin* 中心 ‘centre’ and *xinyao* 心要 ‘essence’)⁴³ in fact implies no substance.
- (4) The reasoning mind is a deluded mind, which gives rise to differentiation and reflection under the influence of seeing, hearing, awareness, knowing, and thinking about the phenomena that we perceive. The reasoning mind is constantly confused and agitated, containing pollutions (*chen* 塵), while in pursuit of the objects of the six senses (*jing* 境). When such objects arise, there is being; and when they do not, there is nonbeing, which gives rise to the extinguishment of impermanence. Separated from the first six sense

⁴² Traditional Chinese medicine distinguishes between two categories of human inner organs, namely the so-called *zang* 臟 and *fu* 腑 organs. While there are six *fu* organs, there are only five *zang* organs. The first group includes the large intestine, gallbladder, urinary bladder, stomach, small intestine, and the so-called ‘triple burner’ (*sanjiao*). The latter includes heart, spleen, liver, lung, and kidney.

⁴³ *Jingyao xin* 精要心, the origin of this term is unclear. For this reason, Binzong added a note in parentheses, in which he points out that the meaning of *jingyao* 精要 combines the meanings ‘located at the centre’ and ‘what is essential.’ For this reason, I translate the term *jingyao xin* as ‘the mind of essence.’

spheres (*liuchen* 六塵)⁴⁴ such as materiality (*se* 色), this mind is originally nonexistent, nonfabricated and not real. It is like a wave on the surface of waters of an ocean, it becomes aroused through the blowing wind and when the wind calms down, it perishes. Since it arises and is extinguished through wind, it has originally no substance on its own, being only a phenomenon of foam, which randomly (as an illusory form) arises on the surface of the ocean. Since such is the nature of a deluded mind, it cannot adequately serve in the capacity of our mind.

The abovementioned fourth kind of mind can be referred to metaphorically as the mind of essence, which is the only [explicit] notion of mind adopted by this *sūtra*. The fifth kind of mind is ‘*thusness*.’ In almost every Buddhist *sūtra* this type of mind is discussed, though not necessarily using the same term. Although the words differ, their meaning is the same:

- the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* speaks about the ‘*buddha*-nature of permanence,’
- the *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* about ‘the nature of profound suchness,’
- the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* about ‘the Dharma realm of one truth,’
- this *sūtra* speaks about ‘the true nature of things’ (*shixiang, dharmatā*),
- Chan Buddhism calls it ‘the master’ (*zhurenweng* 主人翁) or ‘the treasure of the true Dharma eye’ (*zhengfa yan zang* 正法眼藏),

⁴⁴ The term ‘six sense spheres’ or *liuchen* 六塵 denotes the five sensory spheres and the thought-sphere. These are the spheres of form (materiality), sound, odour, taste, touch, and the mental sphere. The expression is related to the ‘six objects of feeling,’ *liujing* 六境. The use of the character *chen* 塵, however, indicates the defiling character, having for its primary meaning ‘worldly dust.’ Throughout this translation, the term *liuchen* is translated as ‘six dusts,’ ‘six sense spheres,’ or both, depending on the context in which it appears.

- the Confucians call it ‘the rational principle’ (*lixing* 理性), ‘illustrious virtue’ (*mingde* 明德), ‘innate knowledge’ (*liangzhi* 良知) and so on.

Examples of this kind are too numerous to list.

Now, we shall expound on the mind of the true *thusness* (*zhenru xin* 真如心): not having falsehood is called ‘true’ (*zhen*) and being invariant is called ‘thus’ (*ru*). This true and constant mind is the essence of our quiescent knowledge that manifests within a single mind moment. It is perfect understanding and silent illumination; it is neither born nor perishes; it is the state of complete purity and calmness, of embracing everything; it is wisdom accomplishing all achievements and virtues, which is without any anxieties about life and death; it is liberated from all emotions of confusion and delusion; and, it is not contaminated by, pestered by the mental afflictions and defilements of worldly existence. It does not contain any *dharmas*, yet it still reflects all *dharmas*; it is not appearance, yet it is still not completely separated from all appearances. All *dharmas* outside and within this-worldly existence are, without exception, grounded on it. However, where does it actually reside? What does it resemble? It is neither inside, nor outside, nor within; it neither comes nor leaves, it has no particular ways or means. It is without traces and cannot be pointed out through words (has no location and no form). It is pure, and bare, simple and unbroken. It is formless and without appearance, soundless and scentless; it is neither yellow, green, red, nor white; neither long nor short, neither square nor round, and cannot be called either large nor small. Nor can it be said to be existing nor nonexisting. If we were to call it large, then it would not be able to penetrate into the minutest particles of dust; and if we were to call it small, it would not be able to encompass emptiness. Similarly, the Confucians say that if we try to trap it, it will withdraw and hide away in secrecy, and when we release it, it spreads and permeates the six directions. If we say that it exists, we can try to gaze at it and yet not be able to see it, listen to it yet not hear it. As for saying that it does not exist, then numinous enlightenment (*lingjue* 靈覺) takes effect, encompassing everything. The former statement clarifies that being

without appearance is acceptable, while the latter explains that it is nowhere. It is said that:

inside, outside, and everywhere it does not exist; but in regard to the objects of the six senses and our everyday conduct, it exists in the great expanse of all.

The sight of material objects and the hearing of sounds is important for perceiving phenomena; we are indebted to the kindness of others that we are able to wear clothes and eat food. The ancients maintained that:

If one wants to see original being⁴⁵

(this is the permanent true mind, experienced in everyday life, but not recognised by everyone)

one should offer service to people closest to oneself, and in the ordinariness of everyday life one should not separate oneself from being of one mind with it.

Although it (i.e., the mind of true *thusness*) is silent and motionless, we are able to perceive as well as understand it, it can match with objects by following causes and conditions, it exists by itself and is unrestrained. In terms of time, it extends from ancient times to the present, and further on into the future, and in terms of space, it constitutes the four sides and the four intermediate directions,⁴⁶ as well as what is above and below. There is no time that it would not pervade, and no place it does not extend to. Hence, it is equally realised by all *buddhas* and inherently situated in all living beings. All *buddhas* achieve the three virtues by gaining awareness of true *thusness*, while all living beings give rise to the three paths⁴⁷ leading out of their confusion. But it neither increases in a sage, nor perishes in an ordinary person. Although it confuses people, it does not leave the same place where they themselves are all day long; and at the very moment one realises it, one

⁴⁵ *Benlai ren* 本來人 can mean both ‘original being’ as well as the ‘original human.’

⁴⁶ *Sifang siyu* 四方四隅, while *sifang* means the four cardinal directions, *siyu* means the four intermediate directions, the latter is further an alternative term for *siwei* 四維, Sanskrit *caturṣu koṇeṣu*.

⁴⁷ The Chinese term here is *sandao* 三道, it can be used to refer either to the three so-called ‘holy’ paths towards enlightenment or the three paths that lead, because of delusions, to *karma* which emerges from defilements. In the above text, Binzong refers to the latter, the path of misery and illusion, the path of action, which produces *karma*, and the resultant path of suffering. The corresponding term in Sanskrit is *triṣu mārgeṣu*.

has not attained anything. The life of the true mind of *thusness* is not the same as life, while its cessation would not be the same as death. It is that on which ignorance and enlightenment rely, while not being grounded in ignorance and enlightenment. Just as water congeals into ice because of cold air, while warmth dissolves it back into water, how could it not have been water when it was not yet dissolved? Although ice and water are different notions, their moist nature makes them a single substance. By the same token, although there exists the separation between ignorance and enlightenment, the true mind never changes. It constantly abides due to causes and conditions, maintaining its constancy in following causes.⁴⁸ This is the marvellous movement of the true mind. Has everyone understood it now? The ancients say:

I have one master, whom I have never met. Were I to have asked him who he is, he would not have given even one word in reply. Do you want to know what he looks like? He is neither long nor short, green nor white. If anyone wants to see him, they must open their eyes and there he is, and must close their eyes and there he is again. Even if we speak about speech and silence, or movement and stillness, it is ever the same.

If you still do not get it, then allow me to do my best searching for it in these wise classics; it has not arisen in one thought, nor does it correspond to one thing. When it is just like that, it is crystal clear and quiet, clearly understood, residing in an obvious place; seek for this secret.

A venerable monk once said:

⁴⁸ What Binzong seems to want to point out here is that the genuine mind of true thusness does not conflict with the eternal laws of cause and effect in the material universe. In this way, it reflects the thusness of the universe within its adapting to its flow, while on the other hand its *constancy*, that is rigidity of character, pertains to its coherence with the causes and effects underlying the material universe. Moreover, stating it in this way, no form of constancy — which one could cling to — constitutes its inherent nature as its characteristic (*xiang* 相). It is mirror-like, it only reflects the constancy of ‘external’ causality. Emulating Binzong’s manner of expression, one could tentatively say that the mind of genuine thusness reflects ‘numinous constancy’ (*miaochang* 妙常).

Before the existence of things there are heaven and earth, the root of formlessness is tranquillity and emptiness. To be able to be the master of the myriad things, do not chase the withering of four seasons.

The *Avatamsaka-sūtra* says:

The mind is the only reason for all *dharmas* of the three realms.

It further states:

Let us observe the nature of the *dharma* realm, it is all created only by the mind.

The *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* says:

What the myriad *dharmas* give rise to, is only manifested by the mind.

The mind is thus the original substance giving birth to the Buddha and the root of the myriad *dharmas*. What is called the *prajñā* of true nature is just *thusness*, and the *prajñā* of contemplation is rooted in that, and textual *prajñā* does not depart from it. By cultivating the causes of enlightenment,⁴⁹ we cultivate this very thing; by realising the effects of enlightenment, we realise this very same thing; by praying to the Buddha, we praise this; by practising Chan meditation, we practise this; by listening to *sūtras*, we are listening to it; and even when we walk, stand, sit, and lie down, how could it not be like this. Unfortunately, being obstructed by ignorance and anxieties, living beings are not self-aware. [Since] the mind constitutes false attachment to the images of the six sense objects, it gives rise to confusion and creates *karma*, and in vain we suffer within the cycle of life and death. If, on the other hand, we are not confused and able to know the true mind, we are not then separate nor different from the Buddha.⁵⁰ Therefore, what this *sūtra* indicates in all its places and elucidates on all levels is that nothing else is as important as the realisation of the mind.

⁴⁹ The Chinese term *xiu yin* 修因 ‘cultivating causes,’ is not exactly clear, however, what the second part refers to, is *xiu ci* 修此 ‘cultivating this’ or ‘one cultivates this.’ By and large, the most probable reference is *prajñā* of true nature, which is also the main object of the discussion in this paragraph.

⁵⁰ Binzong says, *yu fo wuer wubie* 與佛無二無別, which can be roughly translated as ‘not two with nor [in any way] different from the Buddha.’

The Tiantai school lists the following six attributes of this mind:

- (1) The ‘principle’ (*li* 理)⁵¹ is the mind;
- (2) ‘Name’ (*mingzi* 名字) is the mind;
- (3) ‘Contemplation and practice’ (*guanxing* 觀行) are the mind;
- (4) ‘Appearance of likeness’ (*xiangsi* 相似) is the mind;
- (5) ‘Partial realisation’ (*fenzheng* 分證) is the mind;
- (6) ‘The final’ (*jiujing* 究竟) is the mind.

(1) The mind as ‘[rational] principle’ (*li* 理): originally possessed by everyone, and nobody is without it. It is obscured and covered up only by the mental afflictions of the three delusions, so that the underlying [rational] principle (*li*) of mind is neither seen nor heard.

(2) The mind as ‘name’ (*mingzi* 名字): this mind occurs when one is listening to the sacred teachings, hearing Dharma or receiving instructions, and then suddenly realises the existence of this mind; this mind is originally possessed by all living beings, and by all *buddhas* of the ten directions. However, the mind as ‘name’ is only knowing it by name and not yet its actual realisation.

(3) ‘Contemplative practice’ (*guanxing* 觀行) as the mind: if, the moment one hears the name, one undertakes the practice of contemplation and incessantly investigates this, then one’s practice and the object of one’s realization (the true mind) will silently coincide.

(4) ‘Appearance of likeness’ (*xiangsi* 相似): the mind that is seen through incessant dedication to one’s inner cultivation and to the efforts of contemplative practice which bring results, one gradually draws closer to true nature, where one begins to resemble a *buddha*.

⁵¹ The ‘principle’ is the standard English translation for the traditional Chinese concept *li* 理, which also constitutes one of the key concepts of Sinitic Buddhism. In the period of modern Chinese intellectual history when Binzong’s formative training took place, the ‘principle’ *li* 理 generally became interpreted as the ‘principles of reason,’ that is, the rational or logical order which pertains to human reason (*lixing* 理性). To emphasise this very semantic colouration of the term, I will use in the present translation several means to emphasise the ‘rational’ connotation of the term.

(5) ‘Partial realisation’ (*fenzheng* 分證): the mind realised by the power of contemplation and effort, through this mind one can partially become free from ignorance. In doing so, one eliminates some mental defilements and partially realises true nature. Although already reaching the state of awakening, one has still not completely penetrated its essence and origins.

(6) The mind as ‘final’ (*jiujing* 究竟): this arises when the mental afflictions are finally exhausted and the *prajñā* of the true nature of things is completely realised, this is the final mind. The main objective of this *sūtra* is to guide us toward the realisation of the final mind.

We can further explain the mind by using the following metaphor, we can call the ‘mind’ (*xin* 心 [heart]) the centre, thus referring to its central importance. The ‘centre/heart’ (*zhongxin* 中心) is like the centre of a state or the centre of a city, since there is a centre for everything. It refers to what is ‘of central importance’ (*xinyao* 心要) and essential, or, [more specifically], what is called the essential guiding principles of a school’s teaching. If one can attain such an essence, then everything can be linked up together. It means that this *sūtra* is the centre of all *Prajñā[pāramitā] sūtras*. By knowing this *sūtra*, we can understand the complete opus of *Prajñā[pāramitā]-sūtras*. Although it comprises scarcely two hundred characters, it can still completely absorb the essence and aims of most other *sūtras*, and thus indeed serves as the *sūtra* of central importance within the 600-volume great *Prajñāpāramitā*. For this reason, it is also called the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*. In other words, the *Heart of the perfection of wisdom-sūtra* represents a *sūtra*, which is not only assimilated into the 600-volume *Great perfection of wisdom-sūtra* but contains the quintessence of all the aforementioned volumes of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, which is why it is called the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*. Similarly, in the human body the heart constitutes the chief organisational component. The title *The Heart of the perfection of wisdom sutra* is then clearly understood, according to the *Commentary and records on the Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* it is said:

In his translations the monk Tripiṭaka does not say in vain that: “The *bodhisattva* addressed the Buddha saying, I want to explain at the assembly of the Saṅgha that the universal wisdom of *bodhisattvas* is concealed in the heart of the *Prajñāpāramitā*.”

The character *xin* 心 thus refers to the meaning of central importance or heart principle.

If we now discuss *prajñāpāramitā* along with the character *xin*, it also appears to have roughly two different meanings. Firstly, it means that by practising according to *prajñā* we can liberate ourselves from the ocean of suffering, from the cycle of life and death, and reach the ‘other shore’ of *nirvāṇa* which we achieve by getting intimately acquainted and realising ‘true mind.’ Therefore, the word refers to the heart of the perfection of wisdom. Moreover, ‘*prajñā*’ actually means *nirvāṇa* (*niepan* 涅槃), and *nirvāṇa* in turn is the ‘true mind’ (since *nie* 涅 is not born, and *pan* 槃 is not extinguished, the true mind is neither born nor can it be extinguished). This is why we speak about the heart of perfection of wisdom (in the above sense of *nirvāṇa*). Secondly, it means to be able to devote oneself to a genuine practice in accordance with *prajñā*, which can lead to the complete realisation that ‘the final’ is the ‘mind.’ For, if we only practise the recognition of all kinds of wisdom by meditating on emptiness, we are merely observing the mind of appearance, of likeness. If we merely contemplate the provisional truth of realising the knowledge of the path, we are observing the mind as partial realisation. When we are not yet considered to have reached perfection, yet we have already mastered the perfect practice of the threefold contemplation and perfect realisation of the three kinds of wisdom, this is seen as realizing the true appearance of the middle way. *Prajñāpāramitā* is [such] an intimate realisation of ‘mind as the final’ which we can call the ‘final.’ We are therefore speaking of the heart of perfection of wisdom. Furthermore, when our realisation has attained the ‘final’ *prajñā*, namely an understanding of the true nature of things, this insight then constitutes our permanent and unchanging true mind. When our wisdom has attained the final stage, we have completely realised the original substance of the true mind, and therefore we can speak of the heart of perfection of wisdom (this is more or less the same as the

meaning of ‘final’). Hereby, the discussion on the meaning of the character *xin* 心 ‘mind/heart’ has been completed.

4. *Jing* 經 (the teachings of the Buddha): this is a general subject. In Sanskrit the word is *sūtra*, which translates as a discourse (*qijing* 契經). In the word *qijing*, *qi* means to live according to principles and one’s abilities (*qili qiji* 契理契機).⁵² It means to agree (*qi*) with the [rational] principles of the mind of all *buddhas* above (all verbal instructions flow from the great compassionate mind of the Buddha), and with the natural capacities (*jiji* 機宜) of all living beings below (that all instructions without exception are expounded in agreement with the guidelines for all living beings). Living without delusional views and errors, and following the principles is called the correct way. Acting in accordance with sentient beings’ capacities means skilfully drawing from true nature and being able to generate trust and support for people. If one teaches only in agreement with the principles but not with the capacities of sentient beings, then one instructs the followers in the same way as the vulgar teachings do about the secular classics. On the other hand, if one teaches only in accordance with beings’ capacities but not the principles, then one’s endeavour is like a fisherman’s song to the woodcutter’s tune. All discourses of the Buddha are in agreement with the principles as well as the inherent capacities of sentient beings, therefore they all called *qijing* 契經. At the same time, a Buddhist *sūtra* has a distinction, which makes it different from secular classics. To express this in a more concise manner, it seems that this *sūtra* is in accordance with the principle of the *prajñā* of the true nature of things above, and the capacity to understand emptiness and nonself below. According to the *Samyuktābhidharmahrdaya* there exist five different kinds of teachings: (1) birth⁵³ (birth is the cause of all *dharma*s);

⁵² Here the concept *li* 理 appears to be meant in a broader cosmological sense and does not only refer to ‘reason’ as such. The character *qi* 契 means to closely follow something or to accord with something, while in Binzong’s commentary the character *ji* 機 is usually used to denote one’s current abilities and the current state of affairs.

⁵³ This probably refers to the initial state of learning, of being introduced to the teaching, when one’s knowledge is first established and one’s awareness starts coming to life.

- (2) gushing fountain⁵⁴ (presenting inexhaustible content, like a surging fountain);
- (3) illustration [of meaning] (to elucidate all meanings and principles);
- (4) precepts (to make the student differentiate between crooked and straight, right and wrong);
- (5) tying the knot⁵⁵ (so that there would exist no disorder between strings of argument).

Generally speaking, this fivefold categorisation of teachings could also be explained by means of the four meanings: threading, upholding, permanence, and laws. ‘Threading’ (*guan* 貫) denotes stringing together all teachings of the Buddha to make them unscattered. This is like threading together a string of pearls (if the Buddha’s instructions were not bound together and collected into *sūtras*, how could they be passed down throughout the ages without having gone lost). ‘Upholding’ (*she* 攝) means protecting living beings that should be liberated by not allowing them to degenerate. This is like taking care of children (all Buddhadharma is intended to save and liberate living beings from descending to lower states of existence).⁵⁶ Although the Buddha attained *nirvāṇa* more than 2,000 years ago, we are still able to listen to the correct teachings because of stringing together and upholding. ‘Permanence’ (*chang* 常) is passing through many ages without changing. ‘Law’ (*fa* 法) is a rule which is in place everywhere across the four seas. In other words, not changing the words of the teachings since the distant past is called permanence (because the Buddha’s instructions are truest and most correct, and most capable of awakening the world and its people, it is possible to keep the words unchanged for the myriad ages). When everything under heaven

⁵⁴ The term *yongquan* 湧泉 is not an established Buddhist term, it represents a metaphor for a state of learning with an overflow of content, without particular emphasis on understanding and interpretation.

⁵⁵ Akin to the previous four concepts, the word *jiehuan* 結鬘 has a relatively unclear meaning when appearing in the context of Buddhist teaching. It probably refers to logical consistency of all arguments and propositions that constitute a doctrine. The character *jie* 結 is thus commonly used in Chinese translations of terms from Buddhist logic (*yingming* 因明) which denote reasoning or drawing a conclusion.

⁵⁶ The Chinese term here is *duoluo* 墮落 or Sanskrit *cyavati*.

follows its own path, it is called the law (the Buddha's instructions are of supreme goodness and beauty, because they are completely in accordance with guidelines and principles, and they can make the entire world congregate). It is exactly because the law accords to the principles that it can spread through the myriad ages. It is exactly because it accords with the guidelines that it can be handed down to serve as the model for all under heaven. Because the Buddha's doctrine is utterly perfect and vast, it is not limited to a certain period of time, regardless of whether past or present (for more than 2,000 years it has been extremely esteemed by scholars, thus reflecting that it is an expression of permanence through the myriad ages); it is not limited to any location as there is no difference whether it is in the West or in the East (Buddhism exists almost everywhere in the world, indicating that the entire world is following it). To put it simply *sūtras* are the truth, which holds universal appropriateness and necessity of thought (*siwei biranxing* 思維必然性). The truth befits all times and all places, and this is exactly what the role of the *sūtra* is. Also, practising a *sūtra* is to cultivate it. All sages and worthy people practise cultivation and act in accordance with it. If we speak solely about the content of this *sūtra*, it is about comprehending the inherent emptiness of all existence. By pursuing the *sūtra* through cultivation and practice a person can realise the true nature of things. The *sūtra* is also a path that ought to be taken to become a *buddha* or an elder monk. If we were only to discuss the path towards wisdom as expounded in this *sūtra*, its intention is to serve as a shortcut from this shore of life and death to the other shore of attaining *nirvāṇa*. Speaking in a broader sense, the rational aspects of teaching (*li* 理) encompasses more or less all *dharma*s of the universe, the realistic appearance of Dharma as it is (*fa er ru shi* 法爾如是). Such teaching does not err against the true nature of things. Moreover, all of these kinds of teaching are *jing* 經. In regard to practical matters (*shi* 事), the correct conduct of humans is the great Dharma, which to certain extent corresponds to the commonly practised [moral] path encapsulated in human legal systems and institutions. All these [codified norms of behaviour] are also *jing* 經. The *Avatamsaka* says:

If we dissect one particle of dust [of existence], one thousand great volumes of *sūtras* can be written about it.

This reveals the wide meaning of the term *jing*. (All the discussion above explains the meaning of the character *jing*.)

The Buddha's teachings are contained in three baskets (*Sanzang* 三藏, *Tripitaka*): the collection of *sūtras* (*Sūtrapitaka*), the collection of monastic rules (*Vinayapitaka*), and the collection of higher treatises (*Abhidharmapitaka*). We are currently speaking about the *Heart of the perfection of wisdom-sūtra* within the framework of the *Sūtrapitaka*, and not the monastic rules or higher treatises.

II Additional explanations The translation of the Sanskrit word *sūtra* is 'a thread.' In ancient India the teachings of the Buddha were recorded on the leaves of the *pattra* palm tree (similarly, bamboo slips were used in ancient China). These leaves were then perforated and bound together with strings into a bundle, and thus the *sūtras* were handed down to later generations. Because all oral instructions given by the Buddha were collected and edited by the members of Buddhist councils (*saṅgīti*), this enabled the Buddhadharma to be transmitted until the present time, without passing into obscurity. In the same way as the string connecting pearls prevents them from scattering and being lost, was a *sūtra* named after a thread? Because a thread would not be so highly esteemed in Chinese culture, and particularly because the teachings of China's own native sages such as Confucius, Mencius etc., were all called *jing* 經 (classics), the term *sūtra* was translated into Chinese as *jing* 經, to which the word *qi* 契 was added as a mark of distinction. In fact, although the names *jing* 經 and *xian* 線 (thread) are different, they still have the same meaning, for they both describe a connecting thread. According to the explanation in the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, a straight thread is called *jing* 經 (warp), and a horizontal thread is called *wei* 緯 (weft). With the thread as the transmission of the Buddha's teaching and with *jing* as holding together the weft, it seems *jing* and thread are of the same nature, and as such differentiated due to a mere custom.

Moreover, if we link the words 'the heart of the perfection of wisdom' with the word '*sutra*,' it has four different meanings:

- (1) This *sūtra* explains the practice of meditative cultivation along with wisdom (*prajñā*) to help us to get out of the ocean of suffering, out of the cycle of life and death, and reach the ‘other shore’ of *nirvāṇa*. This is a classical ‘scripture’ (*jīng*) about direct realisation of the ‘true mind.’
- (2) This *sūtra* is a classical scripture about the profound recognition of the ‘true mind,’ aiming to achieve ‘final’ (*jiujing*) ‘wisdom’ (*zhihui*).
- (3) This *sūtra* is an important scripture about the most ‘final’ (*jiujing*) ‘heart’ (*xin*) of all ‘*prajñā*’ *sūtras*.
- (4) This *sūtra* is the pivotal ground on which all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* realise ‘final’ ‘*nirvāṇa*.’ This *sūtra* says:
bodhisattvas rely on the practice of perfection of wisdom ...
 and in the end attain complete enlightenment.
 Because all *buddhas* of the three time periods rely on the perfection of wisdom, they attain unsurpassed, complete and perfect awakening.
 It is therefore called ‘the heart of the perfection of wisdom *sūtras*.’

In brief, it is because of grounding ourselves in the cultivation of *prajñā* that we can attain ‘final *nirvāṇa*’; therefore, *prajñā* is followed by the word *pāramitā*. Furthermore, it is because of attaining ‘final *nirvāṇa*’ that we are able to directly realise the true ‘mind’; this is why the word *pāramitā* is followed by the word ‘heart’ (*xin*). How do we cultivate the mind to attain final *nirvāṇa* and fully realise the true mind? Because we ought to practise in accordance with the doctrinal principles (*lǐ* 理) and methods expounded in the *sūtra*, we add the word *jīng* 經 (*sūtra*), at the end of the title. Secondly, if we engage in genuine practice while relying on the principles expounded in the ‘*sūtra*,’ we will be able to realise the ‘true mind’ and see our true nature. This is the reason, why the character *xin* 心 ‘heart’ is added before *jīng* 經 ‘*sūtra*.’ When we are completely free from the cycle of life and death, we attain the *nirvāṇa* of the ‘other shore’ of neither arising nor ceasing. This is why the word *pāramitā* is added before the character *xin* 心. However, if we want to attain ‘the other shore of *nirvāṇa*,’ we must rely on the merit of *prajñā*, which is why the word for *prajñā* is positioned in front of *pāramitā*.

Based on the eight words of the title, its meaning contains four pairs — the pair of connecting (*tong* 通) and separating (*bie* 別), the pair of subject (*neng* 能) and object (*suo* 所), the pair of Dharma (*fa* 法) and its explanation by metaphor (*yu* 喻), and the pair of cause and effect.

- (1) ‘Connecting and separating’: the first seven characters of the title, *bore boluomiduo xin* 般若波羅密多心 designate what makes this *sūtra* different from other *sūtras*; the character *jing* 經 at the end of the title is ‘connecting,’ for it connects this *sūtra* with all *sūtras* and is named *jing*.
- (2) ‘Subject and object’: the entire text in the *sūtra* (*jing* 經) is the object of explanation, while the first seven characters *bore boluomiduo xin* 般若波羅密多心 of the title are the subject of explaining. Regarding the object, *prajñā* is the miraculous, profound practice of contemplation, *pāramitā* is the return to the place of attainment, and the mind is the principle and the substance of the true nature of things. The subject of explaining is the place where the explanation is contained, like, for example, ‘clear water is stored in a glass bottle’ — the bottle is the subject capable of storing and the water is the object stored within.
- (3) ‘Dharma and analogical explanation’: *prajñā* is *dharma*, and *pāramitā* is its metaphor.
- (4) ‘Cause and effect’: the word *prajñā* is cause and the words *pāramitā* and mind (*xin*) its effect.

III Synthetic explanation: This teaches about the ingenious Dharma of Buddhist practice which relies on *prajñā* to liberate us from the sea of suffering, from the cycle of life and death and reach the ‘other shore’ of *nirvāṇa* of final peace (*pāramitā*). At the same time, it is also a classical ‘scripture’ (*jing*) for direct realisation of the real ‘mind’ (*xin*), of the true nature of neither arising nor passing away. It is therefore called the *Heart of the perfection of wisdom-sūtra*. (Here is the end of the complete explanation of the eight characters of the title.)

A2 The Translator

In the above explanation of the title of the *sūtra*, we have given an explanatory outline to facilitate the understanding of the main idea of the *sūtra*. As for the translator, is it important to know him? We must know that today we are able to listen to and recite this extraordinary *sūtra* only because of the favour bestowed upon us by a Dharma Master who translated it. When we are talking about this *sūtra*, we must therefore also introduce the translator. The main aim of such an introduction is to familiarise everyone with the greatest favour, which was bestowed upon us by this venerated Dharma Master, while at the same time we can also get acquainted with his great contributions to Buddhist teachings. An introductory account about the translator is necessary to commemorate his abundant merit, just as we need to know the source of the water from which we are drinking.

Tangsanjang fashi Xuanjang yi
唐三藏法師玄奘譯

I Analytic interpretation: *Tang* 唐 is the name of a dynasty. The great founder of the Tang Dynasty was Li Yuan, who served three terms as an official under the Sui. Later, Emperor Gong of Sui abdicated from his throne in his favour. He established his capital in the city of Chang'an (Shanxi province), calling his state Tang.

Sanjang 三藏: the teachings given by the Buddha in his lifetime were collated into the 'three baskets' (*sanjang*, Tripiṭaka): the collection of *sūtras* (*Sūtrapiṭaka*), the collection of monastic rules (*Vinayapiṭaka*), and the collection of higher treatises (*Abhidharmapiṭaka*). These are also called *jangjing* 藏經. *San* 三 is a number (three), and *jang* is a storage basket. But what exactly is this storage basket? Each of them contains several books. Essentially speaking, they encompass all subtle expositions of truth, which is why they are called the three canons (*sanjang*). Because these valuable Buddhist scriptures are cherished as a great treasure, they are also called the

sūtras of the treasury (*zangjing* 藏經, ‘the Buddhist canon’). When the teachings of the Buddha in his lifetime were orally recorded, they were called *sūtras* (*jing* 經). The precepts formulated and prescribed by the Buddha to his disciples are called monastic rules (*lǜ* 律). The Buddha’s discourses on doctrinal tenets as well as the texts written by subsequent patriarchs, are called higher treatises (*lun* 論). In summary, the *sūtras* concentrate on teaching the doctrine, and the treatises explain the ideas manifested in *sūtras* and the monastic rules. The doctrinal tenets contained in the three baskets are nothing but the threefold training in morality, meditation, and wisdom (*jie ding hui sanxue* 戒定慧三學). The aim of the *sūtras* is to illuminate the ‘one mind’ (*yixin* 一心) which is achieved by meditation; the aim of the rules is to stipulate the three types of *karma*⁵⁷ by training in morality. The aim of the treatises is to distinguish right from wrong, which is achieved by training in wisdom. However, each of the three baskets contains the threefold training. Otherwise, the *sūtras* would not encompass morality and wisdom, and in the basket of monastic rules there would be no cultivation of meditation or wisdom, and in the basket of higher treatises there would be no training in meditation or moral precepts.

It needs to be known that all Dharma-gates⁵⁸ of enlightenment as expounded by the Buddha, are the path to remedy the mental afflictions of living beings, which is also why, despite their vastness, they had been summarised as

⁵⁷ The three types of *karma*, Chinese *sanye* 三業(Sanskrit *trīṇi karmāṇi*) can denote many different aspects of *karma*. If they refer to three types of ‘activities,’ which underlie *karmic* existence, the ‘three types of *karma*’ are, the activities of words (*kouye* 口業), thoughts (*siye* 思業), and deeds (*shenye* 身業). In addition, the term ‘three *karmas*’ can also denote three moral types of activities: wholesome, unwholesome, and indeterminate (neutral) deeds. According to the above context, we can see that the above use refers to the latter rather than the former classification of *karmic* deeds.

⁵⁸ Generally speaking, the term *famen* 法門 refers to the ‘gate’ through which one can enter the Dharma which leads to enlightenment. In this sense, the word Dharma denotes the Buddhist teachings and not an ontological category. In a similar sense, the term ‘Dharma-gate’ can also be used to denote different teachings about the methods for attaining enlightenment in Buddhism. As such, the term should be understood more as a label for doctrinally *different* rather than *contending* (involving sectarianism, heterodoxy) approaches towards explaining the Buddha’s teaching and using it to attain enlightenment.

comprising the threefold training in morality, meditation, and wisdom. Although the mental afflictions of beings are numerous, the most difficult amongst them are the three poisons (*triviṣa*), i.e., greed, anger, and ignorance. We use moral precepts to counter greed, we use meditation to counter anger, and wisdom to counter ignorance. The profound Dharma of the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings resides in this very aspect. A *sūtra* says:

Because of the existence of greed, anger, and ignorance, [the Buddha] established morality, meditation, and wisdom.

Fashi 法師 (Dharma Master): *fa* 法 refers to the Buddhadharma, and *shi* refers to *shifan* 師範 'teacher.' Someone who has extended understanding of the Buddha 'Dharma' (*fa*) of the three baskets, can be regarded as the 'teacher' of the entire world. Therefore, this person is called a 'Dharma Master' (*fashi*), who knows the expansive Dharma (*fa*) above and acts as a teacher (*shi*) to the people below. If one acts as a teacher who is grounded in Dharma, and understands the process of self-cultivation, we call such a person a self-liberated Dharma Master. A person who is capable to expound the teaching and instruct the myriad beings is called a Dharma Master liberating others. The translator of this *sūtra* is thus both self- and other-liberating Dharma Master.

Xuanzang 玄奘: this is the translator's name and commonly refers to the [monk] Tripitaka (*Sanzang* 三藏) who went on the quest for *sūtras*. One should say that the Dharma Master Xuanzang went to India to acquire the Buddhist *sūtras* of the Tripitaka. In other words he is the Dharma Master who extensively understood the Tripitaka, and went to India to acquire several *sūtras*. Tripitaka is a collective name for all Buddhist scriptures and not a personal name. If we speak about a person, called Tripitaka, acquiring *sūtras*, we make a contradictory statement that *sūtras* acquired *sūtras*, which is an error of translation. Similarly, monks like Kumārajīva are also called Tripitaka Dharma Masters. The Dharma Master Xuanzang, however, is the most important master in the history of the Tang dynasty. Even women and children are all aware of the existence of a Tripitaka Dharma Master from the Tang dynasty.

Xuanzang's lay surname was Chen 陳 and his given name was Yi 祿. He came from Luoyang County in Henan province. His elder brother left home earlier than the Dharma Master in order to join the Jingtu 淨土 (Pure Land) monastery in Luoyang. When the Master was 13 years old, he also entered the Jingtu monastic community as a novice monk. He was exceptionally intelligent and not only read many Buddhist *sūtras*, but later also undertook many travels within the realm, having visited other Buddhist temples in search of knowledge. Because he wanted to thoroughly investigate Mahāyāna Buddhism, he soon concluded that the discourses in Chinese had not yet been completed. He also recognized that the currently translated sacred writings still contained many ambiguous passages and were difficult to understand. In addition, because each Buddhist school had its own teachings, it was difficult to know exactly which doctrines to follow. Thereupon, having admired master Faxian's heroic undertaking [earlier], Xuanzang made a vow to travel to the western realms to seek Dharma. Thus, in the third year of the Zhenguan era of Emperor Taizong of Tang (623 CE), on the first day of the fourth month, he dared to defy the prohibition [about travelling abroad] and embarked upon a lone journey westwards. The entire way was difficult and dangerous, for he had to cross more than 800 miles of desert, where no birds flew above his head and no animals walked the earth, while there was also no water or plants. When he rode all alone in the desert, he often encountered all kinds of evil phantoms and odd phenomena spiralling all around him. On these occasions he focused his mind only on the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* (in the translation by Kumārajīva, it is also possible that on his way to India he encountered monks who taught him this *sūtra*). Upon his reciting the *sūtra*, all apparitions and phantoms disappeared (this *sūtra* is therefore not only doctrinally perfect but is also very efficacious protection when recited). After having undergone a long journey of innumerable trials and tribulations, he ultimately managed to complete a more than 50,000-mile-long journey to the west, having arrived in India at the beginning of the seventh year of the Zhenguan era. In India, he traversed all kingdoms, learned extensively about the doctrine of the sages and in doing so attained proficiency in all kinds of languages and scripts. Everywhere he went, he was generally welcomed and given preferential treatment. Thus, at Nālandā University monastery, he received instruction on Yogācāra teachings by the most distinguished doyen of Buddhist learning at

the time, Pandit Śīlabhadra. He studied treatises such as the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* and others great texts of the Mahāyāna. He also frequently participated in large assemblies where various doctrinal questions were discussed; he was often victorious in debates, and his reputation increased day by day, so that he was soon promoted to the post of assistant lecturer at Nālandā.

The Master was highly esteemed by king Harsha, who ruled at the time in India. Once, the king convened a special assembly in the city of Kannauj, where he set up a throne and invited the Master to preside. The assembly was held to praise the Mahāyāna teachings and monks from all four directions gathered there. The assembly was also attended by scholars from all kingdoms, who were instructed by the Master about how to explain the doctrine, and who ultimately gathered to listen to the marvellous and profound discourse of the Dharma Master. The assembly was attended by kings from 18 kingdoms, by 3,000 monks of both the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, more than 2,000 brahmins, and more than 1,000 monks from Nālandā and other monasteries. When the master was giving a lecture, he declared to everyone present that:

If one word of what I am saying is untrue, then, as a token of my apology, I will gladly have myself beheaded by the one who can challenge and dismiss it.

He lectured for more than ten days in succession and all the members of the crowd listened to his words, having willingly accepted his profound arguments, so that in the end no one raised their voice to refute his words. At the end of the assembly everybody was delighted and satisfied, and all participants were amazed upon hearing what they had never heard before. At that time, the master was greatly praised and revered by king Harsha as well as by other kings of the Indian peninsula. He also frequently delivered lectures on the *sūtras* and doctrinal treatises at various places. Once, he converted a renowned member of the Lokāyata school, and on a subsequent occasion also a brilliant pandit of the Sinhala Buddhist school. For some time the master inspired awe in the Indian subcontinent, and his good reputation reached far and wide; everyone admired him, regardless of whether Buddhist or lay and everyone knew of this Chinese Dharma Master who visited their land.

The Dharma Master travelled for more than 13 years, visiting Buddhist historical places, and spent altogether more than ten years in India. Wherever he was, he paid visits to the renowned masters, and managed to collect 656 volumes of texts in Indian languages. Thereafter, he returned to China on the first moon of the year 19 of the Zhenguan era, and visited Emperor Taizong in his palace in Luoyang where he was accorded great appreciation for his efforts, and treated with great respect by the imperial household. Later the emperor decreed that Xuanzang stay at the Hongfu Temple, to be able to concentrate on translation work, which was conducted at the Yuhua Palace. There the Master ultimately translated 75 volumes altogether of *sūtras* and treatises, which were comprised of altogether 1,335 scrolls. This included the masterpiece the *Mahāprajñāpāramita-sūtra* (*Great perfection of wisdom, Da bore jing* 大般若經) in 600 scrolls, as well as his own writings like

the *Hui zhong lun* 會中論 (*Treatise on understanding the middle path*),

Po ejian lun 破惡見論 (*Treatise on destroying wrong views*),

Zhen weishi liang 真唯識量 (*On the true realisation of consciousness-only*), and

Bashi guiju song 八識規矩頌 (*Verses on the structure of the eight consciousnesses*).

Through Xuanzang's travels to the west in search of Dharma and the roots of Chinese Buddhism, he acquired the essential tenets of Buddhist teaching, and thus enabled Buddhist learning to prosper in China. This was an immensely important contribution. He devoted his entire life to the magnificent teachings of the school of Consciousness Only (Yogācāra), and thus became the founder of Yogācāra philosophy in China and at the same time also a figure of great merit in the history of Chinese Buddhism. For this reason, Liang Qichao praised him as the 'First Minister of Chinese Buddhism.'

In the first year of the Linde era of Emperor Gaozong (589 CE), on the fifth day of the second month, the Master passed away in the Ximing Temple in Chang'an. He was 65 years old, and was buried at the White Deer Plain, several tens of thousands of people attended his funeral procession. When he

passed away, the emperor cried loudly and did not show up at the court for three days. The emperor expressed his own feelings, declaring: “I have lost the treasure of the kingdom.” It is impossible to know how many dignitaries within the kingdom and others among them who were worthy of the path (*daode* 道德)⁵⁹ were moved by his death.

This translation of the *Perfection of wisdom-sūtra* was thus completed in the 24th day of the fifth month of the year 23 of the Zhenguan era, in the Cuiwei Palace in the Zhongnan Mountains.

Yi 譯: ‘to translate’ refers to rendering the text from Sanskrit into Chinese. According to the Zhou system, there were translator-officials for four regions: the ones for the eastern region were called *ji* 寄, the ones for the southern region *xiang* 像, the ones for the western region *didi* 狄鞮, and those for the northern regions were called *yi* 譯. Formerly the translators of Indian languages (situated in the west of China) were called *didi*, but later on they were named *yi* 譯, because the translators for the northern regions were proficient in the western languages. It was due to the translations (*yi*) made by Mātāṅga and Dharmaratna who first came to China that until today the word used for these translators is *yi*. It has been originally maintained that there are seven versions of this *sūtra*. But, in fact, there are altogether the following eight translations:

- (1) *Mohe bore boluomiduo damingzhou jing* 摩訶般若波羅密多大明咒經, (from the year 402 CE) translated by Kumārajīva;
- (2) *Bore boluomiduo xin jing* 般若波羅密多心經, (649 CE) translated by Xuanzang;
- (3) *Foshuo bore boluomiduo xin jing* 佛說般若波羅密多心經, (700 CE), translated by Yijing 義淨;

⁵⁹ In Chan as well as in other Chinese traditions of Buddhism, the term *daode* 道德 can be used to refer to a person, who is virtuous in the path of Buddhist teaching. Therefore, aside from its primary meaning, namely ‘the virtues of the path,’ in Chinese Buddhist terminology the word is also translated as ‘a person worthy of the path.’

- (4) *Pubian zhizang bore boluomiduo xin jing* 普遍智藏般若波羅密多心經, (733 CE), translated by Fayue 法月 (Dharmacandra);
- (5) *Bore boluomiduo xin jing* 般若波羅密多心經, (790 CE), translated by Boregongliyan 般若共利言;
- (6) *Bore boluomiduo xin jing* 般若波羅密多心經, (850 CE), translated by Zhihuilun 智慧輪;
- (7) *Foshuo sheng fomu bore boluomiduo jing* 佛說聖佛母般若波羅密多經, (980 CE), translated by Shihu 施護;
- (8) *Bore boluomiduo xin jing* 般若波羅密多心經, date unclear, translated by Facheng 法成.

Aside from these volumes handed down through the ages, there were also translations by Bukong 不空 from the Tang Dynasty, and Qidan 契丹, and Cixian 慈賢 from the Song, which were all lost after the Ming Dynasty. The eight translations listed above are different versions of the same text. Although the titles are different, and the words in the texts differ slightly, their meanings are not different at all. This is just like in modern translations which, to some degree, differ from one another.

Of all translations, the one done by Xuanzang is the most concise and convenient to recite. It is exceedingly suitable for those who study Buddhism. For this reason, his translation was also most widely circulated. Apart from Kumārajīva's translation, which initiated the spread of Buddhism in Japan, the remaining six translations were only used for research and textual study of Buddhist teachings, which is why they have not circulated so well. This is the reason why we are now speaking about the version of the *sūtra* translated into Chinese by Master Zang.

II Synthetic explanation: This version of the *Heart of perfection of wisdom-sūtra* was 'translated' (*yi*) in the time of the Tang dynasty, by 'Master Xuanzang' (*Xuanzang fashi*), who was proficient in the 'Three Baskets' (*Sanzang*). Consequently, the text says, 'translated by the Tang Tripitaka Master Xuanzang.' (This is the end of the part explaining the identity of the translator).

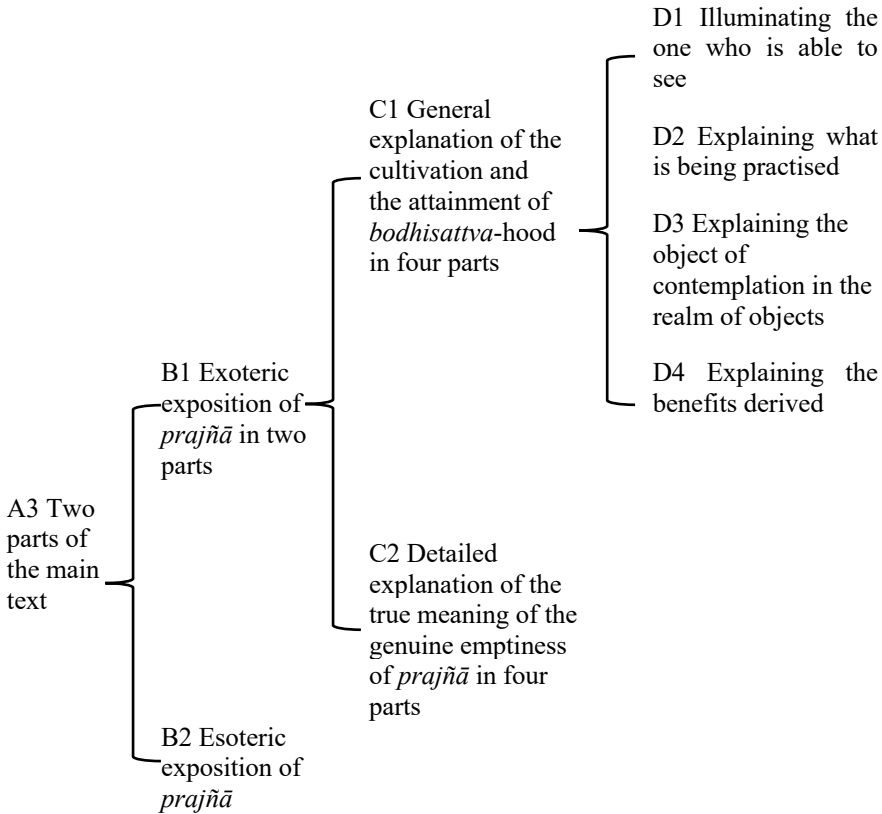


TABLE 5: OVERVIEW OF COMMENTARY SECTIONS

I Preliminary explanation: Buddhist *sūtras* are concisely structured, each *sūtra* has three parts, namely: an introduction (*xu* 序), the main text (*zhengzong* 正宗), and the conclusion (*liutong* 流通, lit. ‘circulation’).

The introduction relates the causes and conditions for the creation of the entire *sūtra*. The main text (*zhengzong*) directly (*zheng*) explains the gist (*zongyao*) of the *sūtra*. The conclusion (*liutong*) advises on how the

teachings should be received and practised (*xinshou fengxing* 信受奉行) and how to circulate the *sūtra* and pass it down to succeeding generations. The introductory part is further divided into general and specific sections. The general part, also called the introduction of testimony and faith which testifies, by using six kinds of accomplishments, that the *sūtra* is the teaching personally revealed by the Buddha, aiming to give rise to the faithful mind. The general part of the introduction is common to all *sūtras*, beginning, for example, by ‘thus have I heard’ etc. The particular introduction (also called the introduction of origination) explains the special circumstances and reasons for each specific *sūtra*. This *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*, however, does not have the general part in an introduction, nor does it have a conclusion. Is it likely that these were omitted by the translator to make it more convenient for the practitioner [of Buddhism] to accept and uphold the teaching? After all, this omission has no impact whatsoever on doctrinal aspects.

Among the eight translations of this *sutra*, five have all three parts, namely, introduction, main text and conclusion (except for the three translations of Kumārajīva, Xuanzang and Yijing). According to the translation created by Boregongliyan, the *sūtra* says:

Thus have I heard: Once, the Buddha was in the city of Rājagṛha on the Vulture Peak, in the company of the assembly of great monks and *bodhisattvas*, and the World Honoured One entered the state of *samādhi*, which is vast and profound. At that time, in the crowd there was also a *bodhisattva mahāsattva* named Avalokiteśvara (*Guanzizai* 觀自在), who practised the deep perfection of wisdom. Immediately, Śāriputra, who succeeded to the great power of the Buddha, folded his hands in respect. Then, addressing the *bodhisattva mahāsattva* Avalokiteśvara, he said:

Good lord, if one wants to learn the profound perfection of wisdom, how should one practise it?

Then, Avalokiteśvara *bodhisattva* recited to the honourable Śāriputra the entire *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*.

It is also said:

When the World Honoured One raised from the vast and profound *samādhi*, he praised the *bodhisattva mahāsattva*

Avalokiteśvara saying: “Good! Good! Good lord, it is thus, it is thus! It is indeed like the practice of the deep perfection of wisdom as you say. One ought to practise like that... to everyone’s delight and satisfaction, to adopt and to practise.”

Now, the text is simplified, it is without the introduction and conclusion. If we observe the short version of the text, the absence of the introduction seems to make the entire text more comprehensible, and more convenient for everyone. The passage, which starts with the narration about Avalokiteśvara (*Guanzizai* 觀自在) and ends with the overcoming of all suffering (*du yijie kue* 度一切苦厄), was added later on by the compilers of the *sūtras*. Because this *sūtra* contains oral instructions by the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, which are based on his deep realisation of the realm of perceptual objects.⁶⁰ It is this aspect of the *bodhisattva*’s awareness which constitutes the starting point as well as the gist of the *sūtra*.

⁶⁰ The Chinese term here is *jingjie* 境界 which generally denotes objects perceived by sensory and perceptive organs. In general, the term refers to the sphere or realm of cognition (*viśaya*) in which the objects of cognition exist.

A3 Main commentary in two parts

B1 Exoteric explanation of *prajñā*

C1 A general explanation of cultivation and attainment of *bodhisattva*-hood

D1 Illuminating the one who is able to see (*ming neng guan ren* 明能觀人)

Guanzizai pusa 觀自在菩薩.

The passage beginning with the words *Guanzizai pusa* and ending with *suopohe* 娑婆訶 comprises only 260 characters; it begins with the words *Guanzizai* and ends with the sentence *zhao jian wuyun jie kong* 照見五蘊皆空 and explains the strenuous efforts of a *bodhisattva* to practise the deep perfection of *prajñā*.

I Analytic explanation: The three characters *Guanzizai* 觀自在 (Avalokiteśvara) refer to a specific⁶¹ name. The two characters *pusa* 菩薩 (*bodhisattva*) are a general designation. As, for example, ‘Mister’ is a general designation, and a certain surname is a personal name. Let us first speak about the personal name — *Guanzizai* 觀自在 — this refers to the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara. *Guan* 觀 means ‘wise contemplation,’ namely, the wise capacity to contemplate (if we read the character *guan* in the fourth tone, it means to understand thoroughly and cannot be explained as

⁶¹ As opposed to the general category of the *bodhisattva*.

observation). *Zizai* 自在 means being free and at perfect ease through self-mastery.

We shall first discuss the reasons for establishing such a name for the *bodhisattva*, while we will try to give another, more detailed explanation of the meaning of the words *Guan* and *zizai*. Why is this *bodhisattva* called *Guanzizai* as well as *Guanshiyin* 觀世音? We will first explain the sacred name Guanyin 觀音, which has two meanings. One being the effort to cultivate self-improvement during the period of practice as the cause of enlightenment (*yinzhong* 因中), and the other is the great accomplishment (*guoshang* 果上) of saving beings, i.e., the benefitting of others on the basis of the results [of this practice].

- (1) Self-improvement within the practice as the cause of enlightenment means that, when (Guanyin) *bodhisattva* practised contemplation at the causal stage (*yindi* 因地)⁶² by means of the *prajñā* of the subtle wisdom of contemplation, he immersed himself deeply into the sense of hearing (*ergen* 耳根),⁶³ turned away from worldly objects and immersed himself in concentration (*jue* 覺), thus entering the state of *samādhi* (correct concentration). He was therefore able to hear sounds, without adhering to or following them. When hearing all the sounds in this world, no delusion or discrimination arose in him; instead, he was able to attend to the true nature of the mind (*fan wen zixing* 反聞自性), which is not in the realm of sound. He thus abode within the door of hearing (*ermen* 耳門). The *bodhisattva* is therefore called *guanshiyin* 觀世音 (contemplating the sounds of the world). This is an interpretation according to the *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* (see the chapter ‘*Guanshiyin*

⁶² The causal stage or *yindi* 因地, is the practical stage on the path of becoming enlightened, which precedes the stage of effect or *guodi* 果地 of becoming a *buddha*.

⁶³ The expression ‘root of hearing’ is a literal translation of Chinese *ergen* 耳根, which denotes human auditory organs; that is the ‘ears’ as sense organs perceiving sound.

pusa zichen yuantong’ 觀世音菩薩自陳圓通). If an ordinary person were to hear these sounds, they might erroneously give rise to ear-consciousness by turning attention towards the realm of sounds, and consequently would follow these sounds and generate the confusion of greed and anger. This is called false hearing (*wangwen* 妄聞). The *bodhisattva* prompts wisdom by pondering about inherent nature (*xing* 性). He hears inherent true nature when he listens to sounds; he does not listen to the sounds of false consciousness and differentiation, but instead gives rise to the contemplation which enables him to hear their inherent nature. This is how to ‘introspectively listen to true nature’ (*fan wen zixing* 反聞自性), and as a result not give rise to delusions of greed and anger; this is called ‘genuine hearing’ (*zhenwen* 真聞). The sixth part of the *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* says:

By means of entering through the gate of hearing, I (*wo*) completely radiated *samādhi* (*sanmei*), ... obtaining the state of *samādhi* (*sanmoti*) ... through contemplative listening, it completely illuminated the ten directions. Therefore, Guanyin is called pervading all directions and realms.

Although the above passage speaks mainly about the reasons behind the name Guanyin, still, if we look a bit closer, when the *bodhisattva* reaches perfect illumination by observant listening, he attains the state of great liberation (*zizai* 自在). It is in this state that he becomes able to meditate on emptiness without forming attachment to it, to observe existence without dwelling on it. Then the six senses⁶⁴ and the six data-fields (dusts)⁶⁵

⁶⁴ This is a literal translation of the Chinese Buddhist technical term *liugen* 六根. Here, the word ‘root’ denotes the *root of consciousness* (or *shigen* 識根), which in modern terminology would be described as a mind sense organ. Thus, the so-called ‘six roots’ include sense organs such as the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and thought-consciousness or mind (*yi* 意). The Sanskrit term is *ṣaḍindriya* ‘six sense organs.’

⁶⁵ As already explained above, the ‘six data-fields’ or ‘dusts’ refers to the six objects of perception, which are perceived by the ‘six roots’ or ‘six sense organs.’

vanish entirely, while emptiness and existence (*kongyou* 空有) are without impediment. How can this not be referred to as *Guanzizai* ‘observant and free’? The *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* says:

From contemplation by listening (*wensi* 聞思), one escapes the six data-fields, like sounds passing through walls, which cannot be obstructed.

This can be regarded as a written explanation of *zizai* 自在.

- (2) Benefitting others on the basis of the results (*shangguo*): because the *bodhisattva* is the source of great compassion, all beings in the world who encounter suffering can recall and contemplate the sacred name of the *bodhisattva* in their minds. A *bodhisattva*'s wisdom illuminates everything without omission; by taking one look they already understand, and immediately give rise to the mind of great compassion. Pursuing the sounds equals attending to feelings. Just as without pursuing, one is not able to attain anything, so without pain there is no relief. It is for this same reason that we call this *bodhisattva* *Guanshiyin*. This is an interpretation according to the *Lotus-sūtra*. The *Fahua pumenpin* 法華普門品 says:

When innumerable hundreds, thousands, ten-thousands, millions of beings, who are subjected to pain and suffering of existence, hear about the *bodhisattva* *Guanshiyin*, and concentrate wholeheartedly on reciting his name, the *bodhisattva* will immediately perceive (*guan* 觀) their words (*yinsheng* 音聲) and they will be saved.

If one, after having observed (*guan*) the suffering of all living beings, embarks upon salvation according to one's circumstances and capacity, they will overcome their suffering and attain the state of freedom and peace (*zizai*). How can this not be called *guanzizai*? This sacred name of the *bodhisattva* *Guanyin* was indeed founded on two of his accomplishments, namely, self-improvement, which is the cause, resulting in the improvement of others. What needs to be further stressed here is that *guan* 觀 is the wisdom of being able to contemplate and *shiyin* 世音 refers to the sphere of contemplation. Regardless of

whether we are considering it within the causal domain or the domain of results, the wisdom of careful observation and contemplation is the same, while only the domain of observation differs. The domain of contemplation in spiritual practice in the state of causes refers to the capacity of hearing the inner nature (*wenxing* 聞性) of audible sounds. The state of effects refers to all sounds which have ever been uttered by all suffering beings in this world, which are calls to the *bodhisattva* for help, and cannot but be knowable. Why do we commonly abbreviate the name to *bodhisattva* Guanyin? Because in the Tang Dynasty people avoided mentioning the name of the deceased Emperor Taizong (true name Li Shimin 李世民), which is why the character *shi* 世 was removed and the name was pronounced only as Guanyin. The abbreviated term continued to be used also by later generations.

We must know that the *bodhisattvas* are pursuing the way of the Buddha and aim at transforming beings below. This means that one lives in accordance with the *bodhisattva*'s aim only when one cultivates and improves themselves and other beings. It means that when we endeavour to improve ourselves, we must not forget about devoting ourselves to the task of improving others. When we try to improve others, we must also not omit the meritorious undertaking of self-improvement. One can only be called a *bodhisattva* if one is capable of doing so. When we speak about the *bodhisattva*'s carrying out the meritorious achievement of self-improvement, it is conducted precisely in order to improve others. Improving others is also performed for the sake of solemnifying the meritorious achievement of self-improvement. Thus, the *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* illuminates that when the *bodhisattva* practises self-improvement, he must at the same time also possess the virtue of improving others. The *Śūraṅgama* says further on:

By not following the sounds but instead contemplating the awareness of hearing, I make all distressed and suffering living beings of the ten directions contemplate the sounds.

This is how to obtain liberation ... rescuing all living beings and obtaining great freedom (*zizai*).

The text illustrates how to help others. The *Lotus-sūtra* also illuminates that the *bodhisattva*'s great achievement of helping others must at the same time also encompass the virtue of self-improvement. Because a *bodhisattva* aspires to pursue and realise the supreme path of the Buddha, they must undoubtedly make for objective the Majestic [Pure Buddha] land (*Yantu* 嚴土),⁶⁶ where all beings will be delivered from suffering. Without liberating living beings, he has no hope of becoming a *buddha*. It is the *bodhisattva*'s helping of others, which is at the same time also self-improvement. When [the Buddha] says:

the cause leads to the ocean of effects and the effects pervade
the source of the cause (*yin gai guohai, guo che yinyuan* 因該果海, 果徹因源)

the very same meaning is expressed.

Secondly, this *sūtra* is particularly grounded in the sacred name *Guanzizai*, since its focus is on the *bodhisattva*'s effort of cultivation and realisation. Because the *bodhisattva* practised the deep perfection of *prajñā*, he was able to delve into profound, superior wisdom (*shenghui* 勝慧, Sanskrit *jayamati*), revealing that the five aggregates (*skandhas*) (which ordinary people cling to) of the body and mind are all empty. Thus, he was able to free himself from all suffering and obtain the great liberation. Hence the words *zizai* 自在 in the name. The *bodhisattva*'s skilful use of liberation is derived solely from the realisation that the aggregates (*skandhas*) are all empty. How so? Because he was

⁶⁶ Here, Binzong uses the phrase *Yantu dusheng* 嚴土度生, which is a version of the Buddhist term *Yantu shusheng* 嚴土熟生 'majestic pure land and well-attained sentient beings.' By the same token, Binzong's words can be translated as 'majestic pure land of sentient beings delivered from suffering.' In Huayan and Pure Land Buddhism, the term *Yantu* 嚴土 is the abbreviated version of the term *Yanjing Fotu* 嚴淨佛土 Majestic Pure Buddha Land. In turn, this term itself is the Sinicized version of the Sanskrit *Buddhakṣetraparīśuddhi*.

able to completely grasp that they are all fabricated and not real, he did not generate attachment to them and was not subject to the revolving (*pravartana*) of the wheel of existence, and consequently attained liberating freedom (*zizai*). This is why in this *sūtra* the *bodhisattva* is called *Guanzizai*. Why then was he commonly referred to as *Guanshiyin* and not as *Guanzizai*? Surely, this *bodhisattva* bears a special relation to all beings living in Jambudvīpa. When he manifests himself as appropriate,⁶⁷ he searches for words (*xunsheng* 尋聲, language) that can deliver [beings] from suffering. This undertaking represents the essence of the vow of compassion, namely, to pass through several *kalpas* of time and deliver beings from suffering. Therefore, the sacred name *Guanyin* is particularly widespread. At the same time, we could also say that it is a kind of symbol, representing the compassionate mind of this *bodhisattva* who aims to help those who suffer, it is a symbol of the endeavour to benefit living beings, which has entered deeply into the human mind.⁶⁸ Because the *bodhisattva* possesses great wisdom and a thorough understanding of all principles, and is unhindered in all practices, he is completely at ease (*zizai*). Because of his great compassion, the *bodhisattva* is able to manifest himself as appropriate [for the beings he wants to save], seeking proper words to deliver them from suffering — namely *guanyin* 觀音. The main reasons for establishing this sacred name have been comprehensively discussed above.

⁶⁷ The expression *suilei* 隨類 means ‘according to type’ or ‘according to species.’ In particular, it refers to a *bodhisattva*’s birth into the conditions, form, and species of the beings they intend to save. A *bodhisattva* knows five types of rebirth, of which rebirth according to species/type is called *suilei sheng* 隨類生, Sanskrit *tatsabhāgānuvartana*.

⁶⁸ The expression ‘human mind’, *renxin* 人心, represents a commonly occurring term in Chinese philosophical treatises, both in the tradition as well as in the modern era. In a collective sense the term *renxin* could also be translated as ‘the mind of humanity’ — not to be confused with the term ‘mind of humaneness’ or ‘benevolent mind,’ Chinese *renxin* 仁心.

Now, we shall set out to explain *guan* 觀. This word has three meanings: contemplation on the emptiness [of all phenomena] (*kongguan* 空觀), contemplation on provisional truths (*jiaguan* 假觀) and contemplation on the middle way (*madhyamaka*, *zhongguan* 中觀). What is ‘contemplation on emptiness’ (*kongguan*)? Simply speaking, when we are applying *prajñā*, we first contemplate the external domain of objects, recognising in them the false appearances grounded in dependent origination, we see their empty substance and recognise that they are not true *dharma*s. In turn, we then observe the five aggregates (Table 6) and the four elements, recognising that they are all ultimately perishable and defiled, and that they contain no real self. Subsequently, we contemplate the six types of consciousness and the mind of delusions, recognising the impermanence of life and death, and that outside the six senses and six data-fields (dusts), there exists no self. What exactly is the contemplation of provisional truths? When we are contemplating the objects in all realms of existence with *prajñā*, and even penetrate into the essence of the meaning of emptiness (*kongyi* 空義, Sanskrit *śūnyatārtha*), we still do not abandon all *dharma*s within dependent origination. Nevertheless, we are still able to adapt to the capacities of sentient beings,⁶⁹ accord with conditions,⁷⁰ and do not form attachment to anything. Observing the middle way means that when we use *prajñā* to observe that all *dharma*s are contained in the middle path (*zhongdao* 中道), and thoroughly realise that inherent nature and physical appearances are not two separate things, as well as that all forms are empty and do not pertain to different [rational] principles (*li*). Then we are neither clinging to nor abandoning anything but live completely in accord with the principles and the path and are unimpeded.

⁶⁹ The Chinese term is *yingwu* 應物, when used in relation to the different kinds of *prajñā* of *bodhisattvas*, it is interpreted in the context of their adaptation to things pertaining to the beings they want to deliver from suffering.

⁷⁰ The Chinese term is *suiyuan* 隨緣, akin to the term *yingwu*, this term is also used to refer to the ‘conditions’ of the endeavour to deliver beings from suffering.

Briefly, in observing emptiness we do not crave for *dharma*s — knowing that all *dharma*s are without self, in contemplating provisional truths we do not relinquish *dharma*s — having attained the awareness that all *dharma*s are like illusions, and in observing the middle way we completely accommodate all *dharma*s; although we do not cling to them, neither do we let go of them completely — understanding that all *dharma*s neither exist nor not exist, they are neither generated nor can they be distinguished from one another. The *bodhisattva* Guanzizai attains his free existence (*zizai*) by means of these three contemplations (*guan*).

Furthermore, there are three kinds of perfect ease through self-mastery (*zizai*):

- (1) Perfect ease (self-mastery) in observing the realm of sensual objects (*guanjing* 觀境). This means that when a *bodhisattva* employs the wisdom of *prajñā* to reflect on true *thusness* in the realm of objects, he completely accommodates all *dharma*s and is thus unimpeded by them.
- (2) Being at perfect ease (self-mastery) in contemplation (*guanzhao* 觀照), means that when a *bodhisattva* practises contemplation with wisdom (*prajñā*), he is able to immediately, without relying on reflection, realise that the five aggregates (*skandhas*) are all empty, and that there are no gaps or obstacles among them. When this is understood with complete clarity, the *bodhisattva* has reached a deep realisation of the real nature of things. For example, a person who is good at lecturing, will speak fluently without reticence in expression, and can deliver the finest exposition of ideas, one by one, which is why we will say that they lecture with complete ease (as a metaphor to the name *bodhisattva* Guanzizai). But a person who has just started learning how to lecture, will inevitably feel not at ease in every respect — their body will shake, they

will be shy in speaking, and their ideas will be in disorder. This is what is meant by making an effort without being at ease while delivering something (a metaphor for someone who is still learning how to become a *bodhisattva*). The one who has obtained a profound level of mastery in contemplation, may be called *Guanzizai* 觀自在. But, if one is still training to become a *bodhisattva*, the effort of contemplation is not at the level of being at ease).

- (3) To be at ease in activities (*zuoyong zizai* 作用自在) means that when a *bodhisattva* practises the profound perfection of *prajñā* and attains a profound realisation of the existence of the Dharma-body, their actions (*yong* 用) arise from substance (*ti* 體),⁷¹ so that they become completely at ease in all actions, and consequently in accord with conditions, so that ‘splitting apart’⁷² still creates no impediment to him. Furthermore, the word *zizai* 自在 also refers to the fact that *zi* 自 or ‘intrinsic nature’ (*zixing* 自性) is constantly present (*zai* 在) and without change (a *bodhisattva* enters the *prajñā* of the true nature of things by setting out from the *prajñā* of contemplation); the wisdom of the true nature of things is the same as the self-nature of *thusness* (*tathātā*). It is this very nature which remains unchanged through myriad ages, having a constant existence which lasts through long *kalpas*. It is such a ‘constant existence’

⁷¹ The words *ti* 體 and *yong* 用 form a binary pair, which can be translated as substance and function. The concept has its roots in traditional Chinese philosophy, and has been adopted into Buddhist philosophical discourse to describe the opposition between essence (self-nature) and function (practice, deeds). The above sentence asserts that the deeds of a *bodhisattva* originate in their inner-essence - consciousness, wisdom etc.

⁷² The Chinese term here is *fenhua* 分化, which in its modern usage is also translated as ‘disintegration.’ Because of a relatively difficult language used by Binzong, the four-character long sentence in which the above word is found, can be assumed to refer to ‘separation’ and ‘disintegration’ of substance, that is an epistemic rather than a purely psychological category.

(*changzai* 常在) that is tantamount to real existence. The five aggregates (*skandhas*) and the delusions are not real, for the only real thing that exists is this self-nature of *thusness*. When we say that a *bodhisattva* practises the profound and mysterious perfection of wisdom, we mean that they profoundly realise the truth of the constant ‘existence’ (*zai* 在) of intrinsic nature (*zi* 自), and become enlightened persons. Therefore, we call such a *bodhisattva* Guanzizai 觀自在. Also, the *bodhisattva*’s being completely at ease (*zizai*) arises from very wise contemplation through wisdom (*prajñā*).

To conclude our explanation of the principle of being at complete ease, we must not overlook the two meanings of essence (*ti*) and function (*yong*): the aforementioned three aspects of observing sense-objects (*guanjing*), as well as contemplation (*guanzhao*), and practical activity (*zuoyong*)⁷³ all belong to the domain of function.

Guanjing 觀境 explains ‘being at ease’ as present when contemplating the objects of the six senses. *Guanzhao* 觀照 is ‘being at ease’ in the wisdom of contemplation. The two concepts belong to wisdom, to the causal, and to self-improvement. The *zuoyong* 作用 (activity) is ‘being at ease’ when saving all living beings. It encompasses compassion, the state of effects, and helping others.

The deep realisation of the permanence of intrinsic nature belongs to the domain of one’s substance (*ti*), while the practice of contemplating wisdom includes the realisation of the

⁷³ Binzong uses the term *zuoyong* 作用, which in Chinese Buddhist literature can have a wide range of different meanings, such as ‘activity,’ ‘causal efficacy’ and other specialised meanings related to activity (function). In the context of the above sentence, the term *zuoyong* probably denotes activity or practise in general (contemplation, deeds, morality etc.).

permanent existence of one's self-nature. In the case of the latter, the compassionate mind of saving sentient beings is also founded entirely on this principle. The meaning of the particular name of the *bodhisattva* Guanzizai 觀自在 has thus been completely explained. In turn, we shall now also explain his general name, i.e., the *bodhisattva* (*pusa* 菩薩).

The word *pusa* 菩薩 originates from the Sanskrit word *bodhisattva*, but was later abbreviated to fit the Chinese language. The entire word should be pronounced as *putisaduo* 菩提薩埵 (*bodhisattva*), but was later abbreviated so that the last two characters were removed (the second character *ti* 提 and the fourth character *duo* 埵), which is why it became *pusa* 菩薩. *Puti* 菩提 (*bodhi*) translates as 'awakened' (*jue* 覺) and *saduo* 薩埵 (*sattva*) translates as 'sentient being' (*youqing* 有情). The two words together are translated as an 'awakened sentient being' (*youqing* 有情 is the same as *zhongsheng* 眾生 (all living beings)); the old translation was *zhongsheng*, the new one *youqing*. On the other hand, the expression *zhongsheng* also includes nonsentient beings, such as plants. It is thus not as precise in meaning as the term *youqing* (sentient beings). All beings that have awareness (including animals) are called sentient beings. They possess consciousness, conscious understanding, and feelings. This refers to all life, to human beings as well as animals. If we speak only about humankind, conscious sentient being refers to a human. That is to say, above all, such a being seeks self-'awakening' (*jue* 覺) into the way of the Buddha, while at the same time it aims to help 'sentient beings' (*youqing* 有情), that is, awakening others. In other words *bodhi* as the fruit of *buddha*-hood is its upward pursuit,⁷⁴

⁷⁴ The words 'upward' and 'downward' refer to the level of enlightenment of the subjects, or awareness around which the *bodhisattva* focuses cultivation. In this sense, the state of *buddha*-hood is above him, which is why he is still pursuing it, while the sentient beings

while sentient beings or *sattva* represent a form of downward transformation (*bodhi* is the fruit of his pursuits, and *sattva* the beings liberated by him). For this reason, we call such a being a *bodhisattva*. The precondition for becoming a *bodhisattva* is not to pursue the way of the Buddha above and changing other beings below. The upward pursuit (*shang qiu* 上求) of the way of the Buddha is a pursuit of wisdom, a pursuit of a pervading understanding. The downward pursuit to help (*xiahua* 下化) living beings, is an undertaking of beneficial practices,⁷⁵ hence it is a practical cultivation. The former is wisdom and belongs to the principles of self-improvement, whereas the latter is compassion and belongs to the domain of helping others. In summary, the upward pursuit is the way of the Buddha, and the downward pursuit is the transformation of living beings. By accomplishing the wisdom of mercy and compassion, one is able to concurrently benefit oneself and others, and only in this way is one worthy of denomination as a *bodhisattva*. Speaking more precisely the term *bodhisattva* has altogether three meanings:

- (1) Self-improvement or self-awakening: this means that a *bodhisattva* is a ‘sentient being’ (*youqing*) who has already attained ‘awakening’ (*jue*) (is not an ordinary deluded sentient being). Generally speaking, a *bodhisattva* can partially realise the way of ‘awakening’ of a Tathāgata (*rulei* 如來), while at the same time still ‘having’ (*you* 有) the minutest grains of ‘sentientcy’ (*qing* 情, Sanskrit *sattva*) and as such is still seen as incomplete. That is the *bodhisattva* who has reached perfect enlightenment, but still possesses a mark of

that require introduction into the awareness of a *bodhisattva* are below him on the path towards enlightenment.

⁷⁵ The Chinese term is *fude* 福德, ‘beneficial practice’ is a generalisation of the secondary meaning of this word, namely, meritorious virtues. In this second meaning the word is synonymous with the term *gongde* 功德 or Sanskrit *punya*.

arising (*shengxiang* 生相),⁷⁶ and ignorance has not yet been completely eliminated. Although such a *bodhisattva* is ‘awakened’ (*jue*), they still have a vision of having ‘sentience,’ which is why he is called an ‘awakened sentient being’ (here, the character *jue* 覺 refers to a *bodhisattva*’s enlightenment, while *youqing* 有情 refers to a *bodhisattva* as such).

- (2) Improving others or awakening others means that the state of a *bodhisattva* is not attained merely through self-awakening. What the *bodhisattva* still has to do is use the mind of great compassion and ‘awaken’ those ‘sentient beings’ who are still immersed in delusion in the ocean of suffering, still in the cycle of life and death. The *bodhisattva* must help sentient beings who are still deluded to enter the path of awakening and attain liberation. This is the meaning of the words ‘with this way awakening these people’ (*yi si dao jue si min* 以斯道覺斯民). This is why we speak about the *bodhisattva* as ‘awakening sentient beings’ (here, the word *jue* 覺 means awakening others and the words *youqing* 有情 means all sentient beings).
- (3) Concurrently improving oneself and the others, refers to a *bodhisattva* who hopes to attain *buddha*-hood while cultivating the six perfections and myriad methods of liberation. In order to become a *buddha*, the *bodhisattva* must bring all-encompassing liberation to all living beings. Therefore, a *bodhisattva* needs to concurrently pursue the ‘awakening’ (*jue*) of the path of the *buddha* above (improve oneself), and seek to remove the delusions of the ‘sentient beings’ (*youqing*) below (help others). Consequently, we refer to the word *bodhisattva* as ‘awakening sentient beings’ (here, the character *jue*

⁷⁶ The term ‘mark of arising’ refers to the first of the four *utpādalakṣaṇa*, the marks of conditioned existence, the Chinese is *shengxiang* 生相.

refers to the path of buddha-hood, while the characters *youqing* to all living beings). A *bodhisattva* is a being who completely fulfils the three meanings of the term *bodhisattva* explained above. Hence, anyone can become a *bodhisattva* as long as they have the necessary determination to pursue what is above and change what is below. The sentence in this *sūtra*, which says that all the aggregates (*skandhas*) are empty, reveals the function of wisdom, while the sentence about saving beings from suffering refers to the capacity of compassion. This is the meaning of the *bodhisattva*'s 'simultaneous practice of compassion and wisdom' (*bei zhi bingyun* 悲智並運). The *sūtra* statement about the emptiness of the aggregates (*skandhas*) can be understood as 'nonself,' and as such it refers to practice and cultivation, which is self-improvement; on the other hand, the statement about saving other beings from suffering illustrates 'great compassion,' which refers to helping those in need, and is called helping others. An expression of the *bodhisattva*'s selfless great compassion is also the path which aims to simultaneously improve oneself and others.

II Synthetic explanation. The *bodhisattva* is able to 'observe' (*guan*) the principles of the real nature of all *dharma*s, and in doing so attain the great mastery of 'being completely at ease' (*zizai* 自在), without being distracted by the realm of objects (*jingjie* 境界). Such a sage is also able to save all beings from delusion and suffering by completely realising the essence of both 'self-awakening and awakening of others' and 'self-improvement and improving others.' Such a sage is therefore called the *bodhisattva* Guanzizai 觀自在.

This concludes the section explaining 'the one who is able to contemplate.'

D2 Explaining what is ‘being practised’

Xing shen bore boluomiduo shi
行深般若波羅密多時

Here *shen* 深 ‘deep’ can be understood in terms of [the difference of] level (above and below): when one’s awareness is described as ‘above,’ it denotes a profound mastery of moral behaviour, and choosing not to engage in superficial practice. When awareness is described in terms of ‘below,’ it means the mysterious and profound perfection of wisdom, which chooses *prajñā* that is not shallow.

I Analytic explanation: *xing* 行 means the practice of contemplation, a meritorious practice, and particularly cultivational practice.⁷⁷ Of such practices (*xing*), these exist in the Hīnayāna tradition, namely the contemplation of the four noble truths, the contemplation on the twelve causes and conditions which an *arhat* seeks to realise, and the fruits of the *pratyekabuddha*; this is called the practice of the Hīnayāna. There is also contemplation in the Mahāyāna tradition, called the practices of the Great Vehicle, the development of the six perfections and the myriad methods of liberation, striving to deliver all beings from suffering, and seeking the realisation of the fruits of buddha-hood. Thirdly, there is also a gradual practice, which relies on the ten stages of faith, the ten abodes of wisdom, the ten activities, the ten dedications, and the ten grounds, it leads to perfect enlightenment, wondrous self-enlightenment. This path of cultivation, in which enlightenment is pursued gradually, is also called the practice of perfection in steps.⁷⁸ Lastly, there is also the practice of sudden perfection which relies on the complete teaching of the Dharma-gate, practising all contemplations together; this is a contemplation comprising all practices, following the perfect teaching of sudden perfection. Practising the profound

⁷⁷ The term *xiuxing* 修行 means the ‘practice of cultivation,’ it corresponds to several terms in Sanskrit, such as *caryā*, *pratipatti*, and so on.

⁷⁸ This refers to the gradual practice, where only one stage or grade is acquired at a time.

perfection of wisdom belongs to the gate of practising sudden enlightenment. Speaking in terms of the contrast between 'deep' versus 'shallow,' *xing* expresses transcending meritorious practice. Like the practice of the '*prajñā* of the emptiness of permanent self' (also called collective *prajñā*), in which one only eliminates clinging to a self, while not yet eliminating clinging to *dharma*s, one only investigates emptiness but not nonemptiness. This is the way of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*,⁷⁹ but not the practice of *bodhisattvas* who observe the provisional teaching.⁸⁰ This is called shallow practice. But practising the 'wisdom of the emptiness of *dharma*s' (also called the 'noncollective *prajñā*') eradicates both clinging to the self as well as clinging to *dharma*s. In this practice, emptiness is seen as nonempty, or even empty of emptiness, and therefore represents the complete eradication of the three delusions, which brings about the complete disappearance of the two kinds of death,⁸¹ and the realisation of the middle way regarding the true nature of unsurpassed emptiness. This is practised solely by *bodhisattvas* of the Great Vehicle, which is called 'practising deeply.' Such contemplation encompasses not only insight into the differences between the three kinds of emptiness, the 'provisional' and the 'middle path,' but also seeing the distinction between contemplating the emptiness of distinction,⁸² observing the emptiness of substance,⁸³ the sequence of threefold contemplation,⁸⁴ and the three contemplations in one mind.⁸⁵ Thus, for example, practising only

⁷⁹ *Śravakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* can be translated into English as 'disciples' and the 'solitary buddhas.' By the members of the Greater Vehicle they are collectively also referred to as the 'Two-Vehicle adherents' or the 'Two Vehicles' (*ercheng* 二乘). In this sense, the reader should note that the term 'Two Vehicles' does not include the Mahāyāna but refers exclusively to the Hīnayāna.

⁸⁰ *Quanjiao* 權教 is temporary and expedient teaching, which is intended as preparatory, preceding the perfect teaching. In the Mahāyāna, the 'provisional teaching' is believed to be the task of the *bodhisattvas*.

⁸¹ These are fragmentary ('*samsāric*') death and miraculous death, which take place when one is in a state of enlightenment. The Chinese is *ersi* 二死.

⁸² Binzong explains this concept as: 'Letting go of matter and understanding emptiness.'

⁸³ Binzong explains: 'Namely, that materiality is emptiness.'

⁸⁴ Binzong: 'From observing emptiness of division, down to three contemplations in a single moment.'

⁸⁵ Binzong: 'Namely, that the observation of the emptiness of distinctions is the true nature of things and that even the sequence of threefold contemplation is also the true nature of things.'

the contemplation of emptiness, or contemplation of the provisional nature of truths, or even the sequence of threefold contemplation⁸⁶ cannot be called 'deep.' A *bodhisattva* is capable of perfect practice of the three contemplations within a single mind moment, to reflect completely on the three truths seen in one object,⁸⁷ on the complete identity of the objective world and the subjective mind. A *bodhisattva* is capable of the twofold forgetting,⁸⁸ of a sudden realisation of the wisdom of the real nature of things, and of a thorough realisation of the original substance of the true mind. Therefore, [their cultivations] are called 'practising deeply.' Let us repeat that there are three kinds of *prajñā*:

- the 'textual' one belongs only to the explanatory aspect,
- 'contemplation' is the practical part, while
- only 'true nature' counts as the thorough realisation of the realm of objects (*jingjie*).

The first two — textual *prajñā* and contemplation — are both 'shallow,' while the latter one — the *prajñā* of true nature — is 'deep.' It can also be said that seeing the five aggregates as the five attributes of the dharma-body,

⁸⁶ The sequence or procedure of threefold contemplation or observation (*sanguan* 三觀). In Chinese Buddhist traditions, the 'three contemplations' can be used to mean:

- (a) the views of emptiness, dependent arising, and the middle path;
- (b) threefold meditation on objects, dependent arising, and nonabiding in the first two.

This commentary uses *sanguan* 三觀 to refer to the sequence (*cidi* 次第) of contemplating on emptiness, dependent arising, and the middle path.

⁸⁷ The phrase 'three truths seen in one object' (*yijing sandi* 一境三諦) describes the ability to recognise the three truths of emptiness, provisional existence of everything, and the middle way in every single object.

⁸⁸ *Shuangwang* 雙忘 or 'twofold forgetting' (also 'double oblivion') is not a very common term in Chinese Buddhism. The text *Essentials of the transmittance of the Dharma of mind* (*Chuan xinfu yao* 傳心法要) mentions 'double forgetting of the mind and the [realm] of objects,' *xin-jing shuangwang* 心境雙忘:

Ordinary people cling to the [realm] of objects, erudite people cling to the mind. The true Dharma is the double forgetting of both the mind and the objects.

From the context of the above exposition, we can see that the 'double forgetting' of a *bodhisattva* refers on one side to the sudden and the gradual, and the real nature of things, and the substance of *mind* on the other. The term *shuangwang* is related to the notion of 'fourfold oblivion' (*siwang* 四忘), which is attained by an enlightened person who abandons the conceptions of unity, difference, existence, and nonexistence (*yi yi you wu* 一異有無).

which is practised by the Two Vehicles (i.e., the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna) is the 'shallow' perfection of *prajñā* (see Endnote No. 1), whereas viewing the five aggregates as the three virtues (as practised in the *Mahāyāna* school) constitutes the 'practice of deep perfection of *prajñā*' (Endnote 2). There are also three kinds of wisdom:

- all-knowledge (*yiqie zhi* 一切智),
- adaptive wisdom of enlightenment (*dao zhong zhi* 道種智), and
- omniscience of all phenomena (*yiqie zhong zhi* 切種智).

The above-mentioned three contemplations are the wisdom of being able to contemplate, and as such they belong to the causes, while the three kinds of *prajñā* are realised wisdom and represent the fruits. Having completed contemplation on the emptiness of things, one has realised omniscience of all phenomena, which eradicates all defilements that arise along with reflection. Having completed the contemplation of provisional truths, one realises the adaptive wisdom of enlightenment, and breaks away from the defilements of worldly sense objects and sand (*chensha* 塵沙).⁸⁹ When the contemplation of the middle way has been completed, one has realised omniscience of all phenomena, and is liberated from the defilements of ignorance. If one only attains either universal knowledge, or knowledge of the path, we call this practice shallow wisdom. Only when one has perfectly realised the three wisdoms, does this constitute the 'practice of the deep perfection of wisdom.' Furthermore, if for example, one eliminates only the defilements of the mind and seeing, extinguishes birth and death (*fenduan shengsi* 分段生死),⁹⁰ and realises *nirvāṇa* with a remainder

⁸⁹ 'Dust and sand' (*chensha* 塵沙) is a Tiantai Buddhist term for one of the three kinds of illusions or 'doubts' in the mind of a *bodhisattva*. When it comes to the doubts encountered by a *bodhisattva*, according to Tiantai Buddhism, these include 'fear of illusion' (*jiansi* 見思, 'observation of one's thoughts'), confusion through multiplicity of things (i.e., 'dust and sand'), and ignorance (*wuming* 無明). 'Dust and sand' is further a synonym of the idea of the 'numberless grains of sand in the river Ganges.'

⁹⁰ This expression can also be translated as 'dispensing with birth and death,' describing a state of dispensing with various forms of rebirth in the six paths, and the three realms of desire, form, and formlessness. The Chinese is *fenduan shengsi* 分段生死, whereas *fenduan* 分段 corresponds to the Sanskrit term *bhāgya*. *Fenduan shengsi* is to be distinguished from the conditions which result from *karma* in the states of existence

(*sopadhiśesanirvāṇa*), such a practice is then a shallow *pāramitā* and does not refer to the 'practising the deep.' Only by being able to eliminate the defilement of ignorance, to eliminate miraculous birth and death (*bianyi shengsi* 變易生死), reaching perfect and complete *nirvāṇa*, can one be regarded as befitting the notion of 'practising the deep *pāramitā*' (here the word *pāramitā* is translated as reaching the other shore, as already explained above, it is a metaphor for attaining *nirvāṇa*). Now, if one is a Mahāyāna *bodhisattva*, practising the distinctive *prajñā* (*bugong bore* 不共般若),⁹¹ grounded in the threefold contemplation of one mind, realising the three wisdoms in one body, breaking away from the defilements of ignorance, and attaining complete *nirvāṇa*, such a *bodhisattva* is described as practising the deep perfection of wisdom.

The character *shi* 時 refers to the time when the *bodhisattva* practised deeply the perfection of wisdom. This was the time when the *bodhisattva* realised the wisdom of the real nature of things through the *prajñā* of contemplation and by means of scriptural wisdom. This is the time of silent contemplation on nonduality, perfect understanding through observation and listening, while being completely at ease and without obstructions. In other words, it is the time when the myriad causes have been completely silenced, without any realisation or attainment. It is the time when one no longer distinguishes between subject and object, the time of nondifferentiation between the objective world and subjective wisdom, the time of the manifestation of the

beyond the realm of rebirth, which is termed *bianyi shengsi* 變易生死 and translates as 'transformation of birth and death.' As a noun the term *fenduan shengsi* 分段生死 is translated as 'delimited birth and death' and sometimes also 'fragmentary birth and death.' Similarly the term *bianyi shengsi* 變易生死 will be translated as 'miraculous birth and death.'

⁹¹ In the teaching of Tiantai Buddhism, a distinction is drawn between two fundamental 'types' of *prajñā* (*er bore* 二般若), namely:

- (1) *prajñā* 'in common' (*gong* 共), referring to the three stages of *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and the initial *bodhisattvas*, and
- (2) the 'distinctive' (*bu gong* 不共, 'nonshared') *prajñā* realised by the perfect *bodhisattvas*.

The above term *bugong bore* 不共般若 can be translated as 'distinctive' or 'nonshared *prajñā*' of the *bodhisattva*.

wisdom of the real nature of things. The *Great perfection of wisdom-sūtra* says:

When all *bodhisattvas mahāsattvas* practise the profound perfection of wisdom, there are no distinctions of *thusness*.

How so? Because the very profound perfection of *prajñā* does not contain any distinctions. The accomplishment of the *bodhisattva* is just such a meritorious practice of wisdom, which could even be called a state in which wisdom is everywhere and at every time. The one who takes the vow to practise this wisdom never loses it.

Note: The concept '*shi* 時' (time) should not be interpreted as the time when a *bodhisattva* is just practising the profound perfection of wisdom, because this sentence relates to the illuminating realisation that the five aggregates (*skandhas*) are all empty, while aiming to save all beings from suffering. This is therefore the profound moment when the *bodhisattva*, practising the perfection of wisdom, has already completed the meritorious undertaking and is therefore able to realise that the five aggregates (*skandhas*) are all empty and bestows on other beings complete liberation from suffering. If we were to regard it as the time when the *bodhisattva* is still in the middle of cultivating the perfection of wisdom, then the question would be whether one would be still able to become aware of the emptiness of the aggregates (*skandhas*) and overcome all suffering even when not performing the perfection of wisdom.

II Synthetic explanation: The phrase that the venerable *bodhisattva* Guanzizai is at the moment of 'practising the profound and mysterious perfection of wisdom' means that he reaches the highest peak of his meritorious practice, and realises perfect *nirvāṇa* (i.e., the other shore). The *sūtra* therefore says 'when Bodhisattva Guanyin was practising the deep perfection of wisdom.' The explanation of 'what is being practised' is thus concluded.

D3 Explaining the object of contemplation in the realm of objects

I Preliminary explanations. By practising the deep perfection of wisdom, we can see that the five aggregates (*skandhas*) are all empty. But the [notion of] emptiness spoken about here is not the one, which eradicates [clinging to the idea of] emptiness [itself] or the wrong view (*xiejian* 邪見, *mithyādr̥ṣṭi*) of emptiness. Those who have completely eradicated the notion of emptiness are consequently liberated from all causes and effects which create the dichotomy of good and bad, and thus do not have to practise the good actions of merit and virtue, or even aim at becoming a *buddha*. If one maintains a wrong notion of emptiness, this very wrong idea of emptiness serves as the method of liberation for questioning emptiness. By this method one does not practice in order to attain all achievements and virtues, but aspires only to realise the [nature of] emptiness, truly realizing that it is the wrong notion of emptiness. Clinging to the notion of emptiness is like a belief that the taste of all dishes can be improved by adding only salt, as if the salt contains all different tastes. If one only ate salt, the saltiness would acutely injure the mouth. In this case, would one not be a fool who simply asks for suffering? The *Lankāvatāra-sūtra* says:

I say that grasping the idea that one is like mount Meru, does not give rise to the view of emptiness without conceit.

Initially, without distinguishing the two kinds of emptiness, namely, emptiness as ‘cessation’ (*duanmie* 斷滅, Sanskrit *uccheda*, *upaśānti*) and ‘wrong views’ of emptiness we can speak about emptiness in line with wisdom. But the profound meaning of emptiness is then not displayed in the finest detail. To do so, we will tentatively try to give an explanation using two meanings of emptiness:

(1) Speaking from the perspective of skilful means (belonging to the domain of actions), *kong* 空 (empty) refers to ‘fabricated and unreal,’ because everything that exists in the universe comes into existence based on myriad conditions and is incessantly arising and ceasing; having an impermanent, illusory appearance without any real self-substance is then called ‘emptiness.’ The third volume of the *Treatise on the great perfection of wisdom* reads:

Dharmas produced from causes and conditions are called empty appearances (*kongxiang* 空相).

Therefore, *kong* 空 means being produced from conditions and unreal.

(2) Speaking from the perspective of true reality (belonging to the domain of principles), *kong* 空 refers to the unsurpassed emptiness that is the genuine emptiness of the true nature of things. It refers to the actual substance within the illusory appearances of the five *skandhas*; it is the genuine emptiness of the real nature of things (*zhenkong shixiang* 真空實相). Genuine (*zhen* 真) is nonfalse (*wei* 偽), and separating oneself from appearances (*xiang* 相) is called emptiness (*kong* 空). It means the separation from confusion and illusory appearances accomplished on the basis of the understanding of true *thusness* (*zhenru lixing* 真如理).⁹² We are, therefore, speaking about genuine emptiness (*zhenkong*). The ‘true nature/appearance of things’ (*shixiang* 實相) refers to illusory appearances. We say that illusory appearances exist in the sense that they have a provisional manifestation (provisional appearances are called illusory existence). Because the true nature of things is without appearance (*xiang*), it is called empty (*kong*) (the true nature of things is in itself emptiness (*kongji* 空寂)). Although it is empty, it is, at the same time, not without self-nature. Understanding the real nature of things (*shixiang*) means that having no appearance (*wuxiang* 無相) is different from nonappearing (*buxiang* 不相). In brief, the conditioned arising of all beings is not real; this constitutes illusory emptiness. The actual substance of all existences is real, in the sense that it contains unsurpassed emptiness (*diyi yi kong* 第一義空). Unsurpassed emptiness is the true nature of things, while the true nature of things is the *thusness* (*tathatā*) of buddha-nature. This is the wonderful mind of *nirvāṇa*. The *Sūtra on the ocean-like samādhi of the contemplation of the Buddha* says:

The *thusness* (*tathātā*) of the real nature of things is unsurpassed emptiness.

⁹² Binzong gives additional explanation to this sentence: “Although one separates oneself from all confusions and illusory appearances, the actual substance behind all appearances is the genuine emptiness of reality.”

Book 17 of the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* says:

buddha-nature is called unsurpassed emptiness.

The *Tripitaka enumeration of dharma*s (*Sanzang fashu* 三藏法數), chapter 46, says:

The emptiness of *nirvāṇa* is without appearances, it is unsurpassed emptiness.

This is then buddha-nature, the *thusness*, the real nature of things, *nirvāṇa*, which are all synonyms for emptiness. So, adopting the true nature of things (*shixiang*) to explain the meaning of emptiness is justifiable. There is even less doubt that unsurpassed emptiness is the same as the true nature of things, and the true nature of things is the same as unsurpassed emptiness. Illusory emptiness is wisdom's negative aspect, while unsurpassed emptiness represents wisdom's positive aspect. (In the following text of the *sūtra*, the notion of emptiness will be discussed entirely in its second meaning.)

In the light of the gradual school and the sudden school, wisdom should be included into the latter, as unsurpassed emptiness. But when we are expounding the Buddhadharma to members of the Hīnayāna school, we still ought to use the former teaching (i.e., about the illusory, unreal emptiness). Yet, when we expound the Buddhadharma to a member of the Mahāyāna school, we ought to use the latter (i.e., the emptiness which is the genuine emptiness of the real nature of things). But only the two combined make up the aim of the teaching of the Tathāgata. As the saying goes:

Medicine does not distinguish between coarse and fine, for its preciousness resides in applying the right medicine for the illness.

Thus, the depth of Dharma does not matter, for its importance lies in congeniality.

How true these words are.

At the same time, we also need to be aware that the *bodhisattva* sees clearly that all aggregates are empty, and enters contemplation with wisdom of the real nature of things, along with the practice of the deep perfection of wisdom; this can be regarded as the quintessence of the entire *sūtra*. This fact must not be neglected by the student.

***Zhaojian wuyun jie kong* 照見五蘊皆空.**

To see lucidly (*zhaojian* 照見) is the wisdom of the ability to contemplate, while the five aggregates (*wuyun* 五蘊) are the realm of objects of contemplation. All living beings are confused by the five aggregates to the extent that they are trapped in an endless cycle of rebirth. For this very reason, the *sūtra* first draws attention to this with the sentence, which speaks about clearly seeing that they are all empty. It thus makes the reader carefully observe that the *dharma*s of the body and mind are all born from illusion, but also capable of obtaining liberation by seeing through the origins of illusions without getting confused by them.

II Analytic explanation: *Zhao* 照 is contemplation; *jian* 見 is to see through. The time when one is engaged in contemplating is called *zhao*. To realise the principles clearly is called *jian* (*zhao* refers to the use of the three wisdoms, and *jian* to the use of five eyes).⁹³ *Zhao* is also the *prajñā* of contemplation with wisdom, free from illusions. *Jian* is perfect and true vision, and it should not be equated with the illusory vision of an ordinary person, who follows the dust of this world and the stream of continuous arising.⁹⁴

Wuyun 五蘊 (the five aggregates, *skandhas*) are the aggregates of materiality, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. *Yun* 蘊 means aggregation. But what is actually aggregated? What is aggregated are the five *dharma*s (*pañcadharma*) — materiality, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. They are the components which constitute all living things. What is aggregated are the three defilements, i.e., the defilements of wrong views and thoughts, the dust and sand [of the secular world], and ignorance,

⁹³ The ‘five eyes,’ Chinese *wuyan* 五眼, Sanskrit *pañcacakṣuṃṣi*, are: the physical eye (*rouyan* 肉眼), the heavenly eye (*tianyan* 天眼), the eye of wisdom (*huiyan* 慧眼), the *dharma* eye (*fa yan* 法眼), and the *buddha* eye (*foyan* 佛眼).

⁹⁴ Here, Binzhong mentions *suichen liuzhuan* 隨塵流轉, the first two characters mean ‘to abide/follow the dust,’ while the second term, *liuzhuan*, refers to continuous arising (Sanskrit *pravṛtti*), namely the ability of the conditioned *dharma*s to persist in causal action.

which are present in all living beings. They are also called *wuyin* 五陰 (in the new translation it is *wuyun*). *Yin* 陰 is [used in the] meaning ‘to obstruct (hide from view),’ indicating that these five *dharma*s can obstruct the true mind of original enlightenment, so that it cannot emerge clearly. Each aggregate (*yun*) of the five (*wuyun*) has unique characteristics. The aggregate of materiality encompasses phenomena which are comprised of the four elements and the five sense organs. The aggregate of feeling comprises the aggregation of five kinds of consciousness with five sense objects (the eye sense and visual form, the ear sense and sounds, the nose sense and smells etc.). The aggregate of perception arises through the aggregation of consciousness along with any of the six sense objects (consciousness grasps materiality, sounds, etc., etc.). The aggregate of volition arises when consciousness generates good and bad *karma* by thinking about and responding to the realm of sense objects. The aggregate of consciousness has the function of knowing the substance of all *dharma*s, by grasping all karmic seeds of impure and pure *dharma*s. To summarise, ‘materiality’ exists through accumulation, ‘feeling’ is formed by contact with the object, ‘perception’ arises through past conditions, ‘volitions’ occur through thoughts, and ‘consciousness’ views appearances with differentiation. Let us give a more detailed explanation:

- (1) The ‘aggregate of materiality’ (*seyun* 色蘊) is material obstruction.⁹⁵

Everything which is material, arising along with the hindrances, is called materiality (*se*). It refers to the external materiality of all objects in this world as well as the internal materiality of the four elements and physical bodies, and also empty space; these are all *dharma*s of materiality. There are three aspects of materiality:

- (1) Visually perceptible materiality (*ke jian ke dui se* 可見可對色), which includes the materiality of colour (e.g., green, yellow, red, white etc.), or shape such as the material appearance of length, circumference etc., or movement such as bending, stretching, accepting and rejecting, etc. These

⁹⁵ The term *zhi'ai* 質礙, which commonly translates as ‘material obstruction’ or ‘material hindrance,’ refers to a special quality of form or material reality to occupy only one place at the same time.

aspects of materiality can be grasped by our eyes, which is why they can be called visual materiality.

(2) Visually imperceptible materiality (*bu ke jian ke dui se* 不可見可對色), such as sound, smell and taste, also belong to the aggregate of materiality although they cannot be seen by our eyes but instead can be heard, smelled or tasted. They are therefore called visually imperceptible yet sensible materiality.

(3) Visually imperceptible materiality (*bu ke jian wu ke dui se* 不可見無可對色) is also called not-manifested materiality (*wubiao se* 無表色, *avijñaptirūpa*) which can be distinguished, without having the capacity of being manifested and thus sensed, which is why they are called ‘nonmanifested;’ they can still be clung to and not forgotten, which is why they are called materiality. Nonmanifested materiality refers to the sixth type of sense objects (i.e., objects of the mind), which cannot be visually perceived or sensed by ears, nose, tongue or touch. Today, we only speak about materiality as our material bodies (*seshen* 色身), composed of the four elements of earth, water, fire and air.

- (2) The ‘aggregate of feeling’ (*shouyun* 受蘊). Here *shou* 受 means to ‘receive’ or ‘apprehend’ (*lingna* 領納). The function of the mind is to receive objects of the external realm. It means the five internal sense organs (*wugen* 五根) give rise to the five types of consciousness in relation to the external five objects in order to perceive objects and situations. Favourable objects and circumstances are perceived with the feeling of pleasure, which can in turn give rise to the mind of greed. Unfavourable objects are perceived with the feeling of displeasure, which can in turn give rise to anger. Receiving neither pleasure nor displeasure is called the neutral (*zhongyong* 中庸, ‘impartial’) feeling, which can give rise to

ignorance. In this sense, what is called ‘receiving’ (*shou* 受)⁹⁶ refers to the first five consciousnesses.

Because the five senses feel force, they are biased in propending towards receiving intensity.⁹⁷ Essentially, the aggregate of feeling contains six forms of sensation (*liushou* 六受),⁹⁸ and is thoroughly related to the six consciousnesses. Because now we would like to match the [first] four *skandhas* with the eight consciousnesses.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Here, Binzong uses the character *shou* 受 both in its original sense of ‘receiving’ or ‘taking in’ as well as in its Buddhist use, namely as ‘feeling’ or ‘sensing.’ According to context, in the above text both translations are used.

⁹⁷ *Shou li pian qiang* 受力偏強 ‘receiving force they give precedence/propend to strength.’ What is meant here is that we tend to experience stronger or more intense sensations more than those of lesser strength. For example, physical pressure or weight/gravity, to which our bodies are constantly exposed, yet we tend to really ‘sense’ only stronger impulses related to these physical forces. Before that, we tend to think that we are experiencing absence or neutrality of sensation — no touch or pressure at all. This can also be illustrated by examples of extremely loud noise, when we are completely taken by the stronger impulses, although there exists exactly the same amount of lesser sounds, which we are unable to perceive for the time being.

⁹⁸ The ‘six sensations,’ *liushou* 六受, correspond to what is received from the six sense faculties (eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body). Here, the use of the character *shou* 受 does not correspond to its use in *wushou* 五受, nor the meaning in the word ‘aggregate of feeling.’

⁹⁹ The ‘six consciousnesses’ (*liushi* 六識) denotes the six sensations of the six sense organs. Yogācāra Buddhism, however, recognizes eight kinds of consciousness, of which those related to the six senses are related only to the first or initial six. In a modern sense, the relation between the six senses and the six consciousnesses can be understood by analogy to the relation between individual sensations of objects received by the sense organs on the one side, and the collective categories of what is thus received. In other words, it is form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and *dharmas* in general and not the particular objects. For example, it is visual consciousness rather than instantaneous sight of an object, prior to our awareness of what form this object has. Geometric ‘consciousness’ of space would also serve as a good example for illustrating the comprehensive nature of consciousness, in which, for example, we are unable to be ‘conscious’ of a line, without being ‘conscious’ of the dots it consists of etc. Although, what one is apprehending in a certain moment with one’s sense organs might be only one line or one dot. Similar can be said about dimensions of space, as well as its finite and infinite characteristics.

Therefore, in the text only the five feelings (*wushou* 五受)¹⁰⁰ are explained, while the entire reception of mental objects (*fachen* 法塵)¹⁰¹ is attributed to the aggregate of perception. Furthermore, when sight and the other five kinds of consciousnesses are perceiving favourable objects, they arise along with the feeling of pleasure, which can give rise to joy. When perceptions arise along with unpleasant feelings ‘displeasure’ occurs, giving rise to sorrow. The states of suffering or pleasure are due to the feelings arising along with any of the five consciousnesses (i.e., seeing consciousness, hearing consciousness, etc.), these are weak in cognitive power (*xiangli* 想力). The perceptions of sorrow and joy arise along with the sixth consciousness which has strong cognitive power.

- (3) The ‘aggregate of perception’ (*xiangyun* 想蘊), *xiang* 想 produces labels or images (*xiangxiang* 想像);¹⁰² this is the function of the mind to cognise or name objects and circumstances. Applying additional differentiations and conceptions to the already received objects is called imagining (*xiang* 想), which takes place in the sixth consciousness.
- (4) The ‘aggregate of volition’ (*xingyun* 行蘊), *xing* 行 means what is intended;¹⁰³ the mind’s function to eternally condition the good and bad, the past, present and the future. Everything that passes away is reborn, [re-emerging in] incessant successive moments of thought. This is therefore called *xing* 行 and refers to the seventh consciousness (*manas+indriya*).

¹⁰⁰ The ‘five feelings’ or ‘five sensations’ are: sorrow (*youshou* 憂受), joy (*xishou* 喜受), pain (*kushou* 苦受), pleasure (*leshou* 樂受), and indifference (*sheshou* 捨受).

¹⁰¹ The term *fachen* 法塵 translates as ‘mental objects’ (collective term), which denotes any mental perception, which does not depend on reception by sense organs. In certain contexts, mental objects are also synonymous with *dharma*s.

¹⁰² The term *xiangxiang* 想像 can also be appear in the form *xiangxiang* 想象 (the second character is different), which can be translated as ‘imaginary’ (Sanskrit *sañjñānimitta*).

¹⁰³ This is a relatively difficult passage, for the words *qianliu zaozuo* 遷流造作 can be understood in many different ways. The word *qianliu* 遷流 means ‘transient,’ that which passes through and undergoes constant change, the word *zaozuo* 造作, on the other hand, means ‘to produce’ or ‘to act,’ while it can also mean what is ‘intended.’

- (5) The ‘aggregate of consciousness’ (*shiyun* 識蘊); ‘consciousness’ means ‘discerning.’ In essence, this is the sovereign mental activity, the eighth consciousness, i.e., the basic essence of the mind that distinguishes objects of cognition and that can cognize the heart of things encountered in one lifetime, i.e., the storehouse consciousness (*alaiye shi* 阿賴耶, *ālayavijñāna*; the eighth consciousness encompasses the entire being (*shen* 身). Without the eight consciousnesses, the previous seven would not be able to discern [between objects]. The Hīnayāna school know only six consciousnesses, while the Mahāyāna include eight.

In summary, ‘materiality’ (*se* 色) is all manifestations of matter. The other four [aggregates] are mental. ‘Feeling’ (*shou* 受) is generated through contacts with objects (comprised of the feeling of pain and the feeling of pleasure). ‘Perception’ (*xiang* 想) is cognising distinct objects and phenomena. ‘Volition’ (*xing* 行, habitual actions) creates thoughts. ‘Consciousness’ (*shi* 識) is the mind’s power to integrate the other consciousnesses. All eight consciousnesses have the capacity to distinguish: the first six distinguish between all phenomena (*shixiang* 事相), and are therefore also called the ‘discriminating consciousnesses,’ which distinguish the six objects of feeling. The sixth consciousness distinguishes causes and conditions along with sense objects; the seventh distinguishes between all deceptive characteristics,¹⁰⁴ cognizing (*yuan* 緣) the shadow cast by the five dusts (*wuchen*) in the past; the eighth consciousness discerns true self-substance,¹⁰⁵ being constantly able to discern the objects manifested by inherent-consciousness. If we examine the five aggregates of sentient beings,

¹⁰⁴ Binzong uses the word *wangxiang* 妄相 to refer to ‘deceptive marks’ or ‘deceptive characteristics.’ The longer version of the word is *xuwangxiang* 虛妄相. The corresponding term in Sanskrit is *mṛṣālakṣaṇa*.

¹⁰⁵ *Zhenshi ziti* 真實自體, *ziti* means ‘intrinsic nature’ or ‘self-substance,’ which corresponds to Sanskrit terms such as, *ātman*, *svabhāva*, and *bhāvasvabhāva*. The translation ‘self-substance’ is closer to the meaning of the Chinese word *ziti* 自體. In this sense the word *zi* 自 is used reflexively, and not to denote any kind of ‘self’ as an independent ontological category.

the aggregate of materiality belongs to the body, which is provisionally assembled from the four elements, born from one's parents. The remaining four aggregates belong to the human mind, which is in contact with the illusory objects of the external world. The [other] four aggregates, like feeling and so on, correspond to feeling (*shou* 受), perception (*xiang* 想), volition (*xing* 行, habitual actions), and consciousness (*shi* 識).

In terms of the sequence of the arising of the five aggregates, they ought to be listed as follows: consciousness, feeling, perception, volition, and materiality. Why? It is only due to the existence of the 'conscious' mind that we subsequently cognise feelings; only when we have received the feeling, we are able to 'cognise' it in the mind; only after we have cognised it, can we act on it (*xing* 行). It is due to *karma*, that we are then able to perceive the body of physical materiality (*se* 色). If we list the aggregates starting with the aggregate of materiality, it means that the coarse marks of the aggregate of materiality can more easily give rise to attachments. The aggregate of materiality is thus at the core of self-attachment, it is the fountainhead of myriad evils, which all living beings strongly cling to and have great difficulty in breaking away from. If, however, one extinguishes this attachment, then the remaining attachments can also be easily resolved. It is for this reason that the aggregate of materiality is listed first.

We have thus explained what the five aggregates are. Now, we shall explain why the five aggregates are considered empty. To put it simply, the five aggregates, comprising the body and mind, are all *dharma*s generated through dependent origination; the aggregate of materiality is compounded into provisional existence from the four elements, the aggregates of feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness arise through delusion and ultimately contain no real substance. It is for this reason that we say that they are all empty. The *Vimalakīrti-sūtra* says:

The meaning of emptiness is that all *dharma*s ultimately have no existence.

In other words, none of the myriad beings of the three worlds are beyond the scope of materiality and the immaterial mind. Materiality belongs to the material, and the mind belongs to the nonmaterial.

We shall first discuss the material aspect; all kinds of forms and shapes that exist in the universe belong to material phenomena, encompassing mountains, rivers, lands, and kingdom as well as the human body. Which one of these aspects is the real one? Because of ignorance, clinging arises in people; this is why they believe that the true Dharma and the true self can be spoken about in terms of the body of ours, which only houses consciousness. The body, which is composed of the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air, has no self-substance; it is made of bones, flesh, finger- and toe-nails and hair which belong to the element of earth; it comprises sweat, blood, and other bodily fluids which belong to the element of water; the warmth of the entire body belongs to fire; and the breath and movements belong to the element of air. When the four elements are combined in harmony, the body is born, and when they are no longer harmoniously composed, the body dies. Thus, the body disintegrates, it is impermanent, illusionary, and unreal. Try to see that. When we die, this body decomposes; the bones and flesh return to earth, the liquids to water, the warmth returns to fire, and breath into the air. Where is the body then? Whence does the so-called self (*wo* 我) ultimately migrate? This is also inquired about in the *Sūtra of perfect enlightenment* (*Yuanjue jing* 圓覺經):

When the four elements have all decomposed, where is then this false body?

This is the reason the body is said to be empty (the meaning of emptiness as illusory and unreal is illustrated here on the example of the aggregate of materiality). Furthermore, we can point out that it is not at all only after death that the elements start to disintegrate. Also, when the body is alive the four elements comprising the aggregate of materiality are completely empty of any substance.

Secondly, speaking from the perspective of the mind, all activities and thoughts that arise from the mind belong to mental functions. The Buddhist *sūtras* speak about the existence of the deluded mind arising through six consciousnesses. The arising mind must rely on the various causes and conditions such as the six sense organs and six sense objects which are fabricated and unreal; they are ever changing and impermanent, they are born and die in the twinkling of an eye. The deluded mind and other aggregates exist only as a consequence of the encountering of the objects of

the external world (*duijing* 對境). But when the faculties and objects are not paired and not even a single thought has arisen yet, who receives feelings, who cognises thoughts, who has desires, and who differentiates? Since the aggregate of materiality is empty, the other four aggregates are also self-less (*ziwu* 自無). For this reason, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness are all empty. It is thus asserted that the five aggregates are empty; according to the *sūtra*, the meaning of emptiness as illusory and unreal is illustrated by the emptiness of the aggregates of feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness.

In general, all *dharma*s in this world, either large or small, regardless of whether they are the mind or materiality, arise depending on causes and supporting conditions, which are illusory, changing (*huanhua* 幻化) and unreal. When the causes come together, the phenomena are born, and when the causes go apart, the phenomena pass away. Since their arising and passing away come from causes and effects, they are therefore empty; they are also empty when they have not yet arisen, and when they have passed away. When they have not yet passed away, they are merely illusory appearances, which only exist temporarily within their empty substances. For this very reason, all *dharma*s are ultimately empty. Because of ignorance, an ordinary person is attached to the [idea] of real beings, while a *bodhisattva*, because they are enlightened, completely understands they are all empty. In the *Great perfection of wisdom-sūtra* (Sanskrit: *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) there is a paragraph, which gives an analogy for the illusory and unreal nature of the five aggregates. We will now quote and discuss this analogy. The text says:

‘materiality’ (*se*) is like an amassment of foam.

Materiality refers to the body, and foam is what is made when the blowing of the wind stirs up water; emptiness has a similar character, although its substance is basically unreal, it still perishes in a flash. With this analogy it was shown that like the coalescing of foam, the bodily materiality of all living beings, which is provisionally composed out of the four elements, is also illusory and unreal. ‘Feeling’ (*shou*) is like a water bubble (a water bubble floats on the surface of water when the surface is hit by an object, a bubble forms and then disappears in a moment; this analogy indicates that all events, like the feeling of pain and pleasure experienced by living beings

are like water bubbles, arising and vanishing, and thus impermanent). ‘Perception’ is like a ray of light; a ray of light of the spring sun which shines from afar in the vast wilderness. The second chapter of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* reads:

For example, a herd of deer, oppressed by thirst, might see the sun’s rays in spring and think that the rays are water, and in confusion hurry towards it, not knowing that it is not so; their thirsty desire is the reason why these thoughts of delusion occur

the deluded thoughts of all living beings are similarly likened to a ray of light. ‘Volition’ is like a banana-tree; the stem of a banana-tree is weak, made solely of [tightly wrapped] leaves and has no solidity; likewise, the creation of all volitions which are empty and weak is like a banana tree stem, without solid reality. ‘Consciousness’ is like an illusion; acts of illusion are performed by an illusionist, creating illusory phenomena, conjured with the help of magical power; they are like invocations to the earth, wishing to create melons, or charms for the water to turn into fish; they are all achieved using the power of illusion, having no real existence on their own. This is an analogy used to show how all *dharma*s distinguished by the conscious mind belong to illusions.

In short, the realisation of emptiness occurs through the eradication of clinging to a self (*wo* 我); it is a form of teaching aimed at seeing one’s own self-nature. To put it simply, ‘emptiness’ (*kong*) is called our non-[self]-attachment, and not the nonexistence of anything at all. In case we cannot realise and experience it, but instead falsely cling to emptiness, then we turn into world-weary people, overly attracted to ‘emptiness’ and escaping from reality, possibly not even caring about food or clothes. Is this still fine? This is not the correct understanding of emptiness. If one acts in this way, one has adopted a mistaken view, and will fall into the trap of wrong views, denying the rule of cause and effect; this is extremely pitiful. Now, we shall also interpret emptiness from the perspective of (absolute) rational principles (*li* 理):¹⁰⁶ the *bodhisattva*’s ability to practise the deep perfection of wisdom,

¹⁰⁶ In Chinese Consciousness-Only thought, for example, the concept *li* 理 is to be understood as the *absolute* aspect of physical reality, which is cognized by humans as an order of definite principles of nature. On the other hand, the term *shi* 事 describes the relative, both

the manifestation of the Buddha's wisdom (*āryajñāna*), is seeing through the real appearance of all *dharma*s as they are, and that the substance of each of the five aggregates is empty of real nature. In this way, in a single moment, the body and the mind, and the world with innumerable appearances and images are understood to be empty, and there is nothing really attainable. This is very profound wisdom, the explanation of which requires the following analogy. Let us give as an example a wave, arisen on the surface of the vast ocean, although this wave is comprised of the materiality of foam-accumulating phenomena, which are illusory and unreal, its substance is nevertheless water. Although its appearance is illusory, its substance is still 'real'. The five aggregates are phantasmic shadows that manifest within the substance of our true minds. Although these [shadows] are illusory and unreal, their actual substance is still the true nature of the mind. The myriad phenomena of the universe are thus waves that arise within our minds. This is the true meaning of the proposition that the actual substance of the five aggregates is the true emptiness of the real nature of things. The Chan Master Baizhang 百丈 said:

Abandoning the conditions of illusions is the dharma-body (*rurufō* 如如佛, *dharmakāya*) (the dharma-body is true emptiness of real nature).

The *Diamond-sūtra* says:

If one recognizes that all appearances are nonappearances, one recognizes the Tathāgata.

The *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* says:

The aggregates, sense bases and elements are originally the hidden subtle nature of the true *thusness* of the Tathāgata.

It further says:

When one contemplates the original illusoriness of phenomena and appearances (*xiang* 相), there is nothing one can point at and comment upon; when one contemplates original, true self-nature, only then is the wondrous awakening illuminating.

It is therefore said that the five aggregates are all empty (in the provisional interpretation of the text, the real nature of true emptiness and unsurpassed

in the sense of phenomenological contingency (*shi* as 'an event, affair') as well as the nonabsoluteness of real nature or substance of physical phenomena.

emptiness are all used to illustrate that the five aggregates are all empty). In essence, the manifestations (*xiang*) of the five aggregates are all illusory. Their substance is genuinely empty. But the differentiations of the deluded minds of living beings maintain the wrong view of the five aggregates and lose sight of true emptiness. Using wisdom (*prajñā*), the *bodhisattva* is able to see clearly genuine emptiness and abandons the five aggregates. It is, therefore, true emptiness that serves as the actual substance of the illusory appearances of the five aggregates. Although we say that illusory existences can obscure true emptiness, the principle of true emptiness can be hidden and unseen (confused) by the manifestations of illusory beings. Illusory existence, however, does not obscure true emptiness. Therefore, once true emptiness is unveiled, the phenomena of illusory existence are immediately lost.

Here is a question which deserves further research. When we speak about ‘seeing clearly that the five aggregates are empty,’ what do we actually mean by empty? Is it the emptiness of appearances (*xiang*) or the emptiness of true nature? The usual explanation maintains that it is the emptiness of appearances of the five aggregates. This explanation is, however, rather unreliable. Was it not said above that the *dharmas* generated by the causal amassment of the five aggregates are essentially without self-nature and because they are devoid by self-nature we call them empty? But it is not true that they are devoid of provisional appearances (*jiaxiang*). Here we talk about emptiness in a doctrinal sense, not the emptiness of complete nonexistence. The *Treatise on the acclamation of the ārya teachings* (*Prakaranāryavācā-śāstra*) says:

When we investigate all *dharmas*, we can see no *self-nature*, but it is not that in the wisdom of all modes¹⁰⁷ there is nothing that is attained.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ *Yiqie zhong* 一切種 can be translated both as ‘all seeds’ (Sanskrit *sarvabījaka*) as well as ‘all kinds of manifestations’ (Sanskrit *sarvathā* etc.).

¹⁰⁸ The term here is *wusuode* 無所得, literally ‘without anything to attain’ or ‘nothing to be attained’ (related to Sanskrit *aprāptitva*). Sometimes, in Chinese translations of Buddhist texts the expression is also interchangeable with ‘nonapprehension’ (*bukede* 不可得 ‘cannot be attained,’ Sanskrit *anupalambha*). By the same token, as a term describing a category which cannot be grasped, attained or pinned down by our rational means, the

Some people may say that what pertains to the emptiness of nature is even less expressible by establishing a theory about it (*lilun* 理論), because if emptiness means the effect of not having a self-nature, then if something does have self-nature, how can it be called empty? This is a very clear argument. Or some people might also say: Since you have pointed out that, ‘seeing clearly that the actual substance of the appearances of the five aggregates is genuine emptiness of the true nature,’ then we may assume that genuine emptiness of true nature is the same as the self-nature of the five aggregates. This is wrong. To say that the true nature of genuine emptiness serves as the actual substance is not at all to say that the former (true nature of genuine emptiness) is their self-nature. Since the word is about true nature (*shixiang*), it cannot be empty, because the genuine emptiness of the true nature of things is separate from all appearances (*xiang*), from all *dharma*s. It neither arises nor passes away, because there is no such thing as empty and not empty. If it were empty, then how could it be called genuine emptiness of true nature? This is a question worth considering. In brief, what we call empty (*kong*), is called in this way because the five aggregates have no self-nature. The translation created by the monastic Dharmacandra (Fayue) in the Tang Dynasty renders this same sentence as:

he sees clearly that the self-nature of the five aggregates is empty
(*zhaojian wuyue zixing jie kong*, 照見五蘊自性皆空)

(empty (*kong*) means nonexistent; this is, however, an interpretation in the domain of expedient means; the interpretation is completely different if given in the domain of the true nature of things (*shixiang*)). This sentence can make us understand them all. It ought to be explained as

he saw clearly that the five aggregates are all without self-nature
(*zhaojian wuyun jie wu zixing* 照見五蘊皆無自性).

The word *zixing* 自性 (self-nature) means ‘self’ (*wo*). In this way, being without *zixing* means being without self-nature (*wo-xing* 我性). Why do the five aggregates have no self-nature? To grasp this, we must first understand the definition of self. Only then this question can be resolved. ‘Self’ has two different meanings:

term also implies inability to discern between subject and object, and so something not to be pursued rationally, not the object of any rational inquiry.

(1) The first meaning is autonomy (*zizhu* 自主); (2) and the second is being unimpeded (*zizai* 自在). Only if one is both autonomous and unimpeded, can one speak of having a self (*wo* 我). We may ask: “Can we really be the ‘master’ of all these fabricated *dharmas* brought about dependently by the [interaction of] the five aggregates? Can [we really] always remain unimpeded, unchanging?” I believe that everyone who knows about Buddhadharma, will give a negative answer. Therefore, a commentary says:

provisionally composed of the four elements, the illusory body has no real self; feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness are all vague impressions (shadows) that emerge from the deluded mind, they originally have no self-substance, they are born and perish in an instant, and are ever changing and impermanent.

Because they have no real ‘self-nature’ (*woxing*), we say that they are empty and we are thus able to recognize their empty self-nature (*wo-xing*) — *zixing* 自性. Even the dependently arisen appearances of the five aggregates cannot be discussed in the same line with emptiness. Otherwise, we may erroneously negate materiality and focus on emptiness (*mie se qu kong* 滅色取空), which really goes against the meaning of emptiness as illuminated by wisdom (*prajñā*), because the emptiness of the perfection of wisdom consists of all *dharmas*’ emptiness of self-nature. This does not entail abandoning the dependently arisen provisional concepts expressed in language, the so-called emptiness of self-nature does not obstruct what comes into existence by dependent origination. Only in this way are we able to agree with the correct meaning of the teaching. The *Great perfection of wisdom-sūtra* says:

All *dharmas* are empty of self-nature (all *dharmas* have no self-nature).

On a more specific note, the *dharmas* of dependent generation and the five aggregates are impermanent. Because of impermanence, they give rise to suffering; because of suffering, they are self-less, and because they are selfless, we say that they are empty. Desiring no impermanence and no suffering in the domain of *dharmas* is ultimately unobtainable. This means that *dharmas* do not have an ‘autonomous’ (*zizhu*), ‘unrestrained’ (*zizai*) self-nature and hence we say ‘the five aggregates are all empty.’ If the five aggregates had self-nature, then they could be autonomous and at ease, and

would not be impermanent nor contain suffering, and thus we could not say they are empty. We ought to know that the five aggregates do not contain any *dharmas* that could make them cease and cause them to be empty. In truth, however, their self-nature is empty. The *sūtra* says:

Materiality is empty of self-nature, but it is not empty because of the continuous cessation of materiality.

In summary, everybody can now more or less fully understand the reason we say that the five aggregates are empty or lacking self-nature. In the fifth volume of the *Connected discourses* (*Za ahan* 雜阿含, *Samyukta āgama*, *Taishō Tripiṭaka catalogue* no. 110) there is a paragraph, which illustrates how the five aggregates have no self-nature and no autonomy in a very thorough manner. But in order to avoid being too lengthy, we will not repeat that paragraph here, but instead ask the reader to consult the text on their own.

Originally, the illusory *dharmas* of the five aggregates, akin to the empty yet splendid image of moonlight on the water (*shui yue kong hua* 水月空華), have no real substance. Still, confused and ignorant beings of this world, not being aware of all-permeating emptiness, rashly give rise to attachments. Now, if we contemplate these things with supreme wisdom, observing this illusory physical body, comprised of the four elements, which have no self of their own, it becomes evident that the body is empty. Similarly, observing delusive thinking which arises in everyday life, we can see that it has no self-nature, while its substance is true. The understanding that the five aggregates are empty liberates the body and mind, and *prajñā* of the true nature of things manifests before one's eyes. However, we still cannot instantly transcend the cycle of life and death; in reaching the far shore there are absolutely no such affairs. The meritorious power of wisdom (*prajñā*) is vast.

We can illustrate this with the following metaphor: the five aggregates are like a room, anxiety is like the door, clinging is like the lock, the genuine emptiness of true nature is like an object within this room, and wisdom (*prajñā*) is like the key; contemplation of *dharmas* is like the method for unlocking the door, and seeing the object within the room is like realising the true nature of things (*shixiang*). Through beginningless *kalpas* living beings accumulate numerous troubles and suffering, generate all kinds of clinging, which keep the emptiness of true nature constantly shut within the room of

the five aggregates. These beings are not only unwilling to open the room and explore it, but know neither its location nor the method to unlock it. If I am able to rely on wisdom (*prajñā*) and strive to carry out true cultivation (*zhenxiu* 真修),¹⁰⁹ then I am using the key of wondrous wise contemplation to unlock the lock of clinging and open the door of suffering and anxieties, to thoroughly understand the room of the five aggregates, and see the locked subtle treasure that is the wondrous principle of genuine emptiness. When we realise emptiness, we reap great benefits and experience great happiness, which cannot be described by anyone. When we unlock the door, this is called *zhao* 照, and when the objects within the closed room are made visible, this is called *jian* 見. While everyone possesses the lock, made of all kinds of clinging, the wondrous *dharma* of wisdom (*prajñā*) is the key, which is so much needed by the entire world. If you can use this key effectively, you will certainly be able to unlock the door and there will be no door you will not be able to open. The student of Buddhism ought to strive hard towards it.

III Synthetic explanation: The *bodhisattva* Guanzizai used profound superior wisdom (*prajñā*) to observe that the body (i.e., the aggregate of materiality), composed of the four elements, as well as feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness, are all generated by conditioned arising and without self-nature, and saw that their actual substance is empty. The *sūtra*, therefore, says:

he clearly saw that the five aggregates are all empty.

¹⁰⁹ The second of the two kinds of cultivation (*erxiu* 二修); the other kind is called *yuanxiu* 緣修 ‘deliberate’ or ‘conditioned cultivation.’

The five aggregates (wuyun 五蘊)	Materiality (se 色)	<i>The four elements of the human body, the five sense organs as inner materiality, and the five sense objects as external materiality. All belong to the dharma of materiality.</i>
	Feeling (shou 受)	<i>The five consciousnesses within the five senses, experiencing the manifestations of the five objects of feeling...</i>
	Perception (xiang 想)	<i>Deluded mental concepts, distinguishing the causal silhouette/appearances of the five objects of the senses, this is the sixth consciousness.</i>
	Volition (xing 行)	<i>Clinging to the self due to the distinctions perceived by the eighth consciousness, incessant thinking through the mind sense door of the seventh consciousness.</i>
	Consciousness (shi 識)	<i>Understanding that the nature of all consciousnesses depends on the seeds of all good and bad states; this is the eighth consciousness. The previous four aggregates belong to the dharma of the mind.</i>

TABLE 6: THE FIVE AGGREGATES

Here ends the explanation of what is the contemplation on the realm of objects.

D4 Explaining the benefits derived

Du yiqie ku'e

度一切苦厄,

because of seeing clearly that the five aggregates are all empty, the *bodhisattva* is able to liberate himself from all suffering.

I Analytic explanation. *Du* 度 means to be relieved from suffering. *Yiqie* 一切 is a generalising word, which expresses that the suffering and misery in the world are measureless and boundless. *Ku* 苦 means vexations, which is used in relation to the body and mind; *e* 厄 means adversity, disaster, danger, difficulties. The suffering of the cycle of rebirth within the six realms of existence is a major disaster. To be born in the three evil realms because of ignorance is the most dangerous and difficult. Suffering means to be fundamentally unable to get out from ‘delimitation’ (*fenduan* 分段) and ‘transformation’ (*bianyi* 變易),¹¹⁰ which are the two kinds of suffering of *samsāra* (Endnote No. 3). Transformation is the cycle of birth and death experienced by beings outside the [three] realms (*jiewai* 界外). Delimitation is the cycle of life and death experienced by ordinary people who can

¹¹⁰ The terms *fenduan* 分段 and *bianyi* 變易 refer to the two kinds of rebirth (*samsāra*), which in combination with these two expressions is usually termed *shengsi* 生死 (‘birth and death’). The terms *fenduan shengsi* and *bianyi shengsi* can also be translated as ‘birth and death in punctuated succession’ and ‘birth and death by alternation and change,’ respectively. While the term *fenduan shengsi* describes the ‘actual process of death and rebirth into new bodies, bodies that are the products of our previous actions,’ the latter term *bianyi shengsi* refers either to ‘positive psychological transformation or to the subtle mental instabilities a novice *bodhisattva* experiences due to the presence of afflictions’ (Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 118, 302). However, conceptual problems may arise, when one attempts to interpret these two terms, which are well established in Chinese Yogācāra and Tiantai Buddhism, in terms of their Sanskrit counterparts, namely *paricchedajarāmaṇa* and *pariṇāmikajarāmaṇa*. The literal meaning of the latter two Sanskrit terms would translate as ‘determinative birth-and-death’ and ‘transfigurational birth-and-death.’

undergo transmigration through the six destinies (*liudao* 六道). Speaking from the human perspective, if there were no birth and death, there would be no suffering. Since the suffering in these three realms is already inexpressible, how much more is it in the three lower realms (*san e'dao* 三惡道)? Now we will explain the three kinds of suffering, and the eight kinds of suffering.

The three kinds of suffering are:

- (1) Suffering due to external circumstances (*kuku* 苦苦 , *duḥkhaḍuḥkhatā*): this is suffering of the body, distress and pain. When the aggregates of suffering are compounded, this is already called suffering (*ku*). But when natural calamities and man-made disasters and similar calamities are added, these are all called suffering due to external circumstances (*kuku*).
- (2) Suffering due to impermanence (*huaiku* 壞苦 , *vipariṇāmaduḥkhatā*) is the distress due to the ending of pleasure, i.e., when great joy turns into sorrow, like the suffering which can befall a rich child who has lost everything. These are called suffering due to impermanence.
- (3) Suffering as a consequence of the changes of conditioned existence (*xingku* 行苦 , *saṃskāraduḥkhatā*): *xing* 行 means changes; it refers to changes in physical and mental circumstances, which are called sufferings as a consequence of action (the law of suffering consists of constant instability such as ageing, sudden illness, or sudden death, these are all forms of sufferings that are generated due to impermanence).

In brief, when we experience pain and suffering without joy, we call this suffering due to external circumstances. When we experience joy on encountering favourable circumstances which are, then lost and followed by sorrow, this is called suffering due to impermanence. However, when one is without suffering or joy, one can still experience instability due to impermanence of the body and mind. This is called suffering as a consequence of the changes of conditioned existence. Speaking in more detail: *kuku* 苦苦 refers to the suffering experienced by humans as well as titans (*asūras*), the beings of the underworld, hungry ghosts, and animals.

Huaiku 壞苦 refers to suffering experienced within the Six Heavens of the Desire Realm and among celestial beings and humans of the material realm (although there is much more joy in the heavens than in the human world), and in the four stages of meditation (*catvāri dhyānāni*). For example, the beings of the Six Heavens of the Desire Realm (Heaven of the Four Kings (*caturmahārājika*), the Heaven of the Thirty-Three Gods (*trayastrimśa*), the Yama (Yamadeva) Heaven, the Tuṣita Heaven, the Nirmāṇarati Heaven, and the Paranirmitavaśavartin Heaven) have all the food and clothing they desire, residing happily in stately palaces, while they are only affected by the afflictions of the ten virtues, so that one day, when all their merit ultimately expires, the five signs of decay come into existence; these are:

- (1) their clothes become filthy
- (2) their garlands wane
- (3) their bodies become foul-smelling
- (4) their armpits become sweaty, and
- (5) the heavenly palaces appear unpleasant to them.

They then experience great pain and suffering. The *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* says:

Although in the heavens there is no such thing as great distress, the five signs of decay still make heavenly beings experience great pain, akin to the one experienced in hell.

In meditation, when the four meditative absorptions, based on high concentration, are reached, they are accompanied by experiencing joy and pleasure; however, the meditator still has not overcome the dormant defilements. When one meditates on the shortcomings of the afflictions of impermanence, great vexations and unhappiness can arise, which is called suffering from impermanence. *Huaiku* 壞苦 (suffering as a consequence of *karma*) is a form of suffering experienced by divine beings (*devas*) living in the four immaterial heavens (Sanskrit *caturārūpyabrahmaloka*). When contemplating emptiness in these immaterial realms, the *devas* dislike any change and strongly desire to attain stillness. At the same time, they do not experience any burdensome states related to accumulation of materiality and substance, but only the joy of meditating on emptiness. It is only at the level of the highest Heaven of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception that, depending on the power of meditative absorption, one brings the six consciousnesses into stillness that lasts for 84,000 great *kalpa*. However, having spent the lifespan of 83,999 and a half *kalpa*, their mediation has been

exhausted, and the mind can gradually return to ever-changing movement, and finally into rebirth. Then, major vexation arises, akin to an arrow piercing the body, the pain experienced is many times greater than the usual suffering. The *Treatise of wisdom* (*Zhi lun* 智論) says:

when one dies in the highest two realms, it is followed by great vexation, a greater suffering than in the lower realms; the pain is then akin to the pain experienced when one's body breaks after falling from the highest possible place.

The suffering they thus experience is incomprehensible. Even if one has not yet fallen, one is also unable to avoid the constant experience of the pain [arising from the] elapsing of the successive moments of the mind of volition (the seventh consciousness), which is therefore called suffering as a consequence of *karma*. When the ancients said:

in the realm of desires there are three forms of suffering, while in the realm of form there is no suffering due to external circumstances (*kuku*), and in the formless realm there only exists the suffering as consequence of the changes of conditioned existence (*xingku*)

they had the same meaning in mind.

Secondly, what exactly are the eight forms of suffering? They are listed on Table 7.

1	<i>Suffering due to birth</i>	In a mother's womb, one is like a prisoner in prison.
2	<i>Suffering due to old age</i>	Feeble and of a dried-up appearance, of waning spirit and weak mental capacities.
3	<i>Suffering due to illness</i>	Suffering pain through all senses, being restless and anxious.
4	<i>Suffering due to death</i>	When the four elements disintegrate, the muscles wither and the bones crack.
5	<i>Pain of parting with loved ones</i>	When family members joined in conjugal love are separated in life or death.
6	<i>Suffering due to not getting what we want</i>	When circumstances are not agreeable, wanting to obtain something or unexpectedly losing it.
7	<i>Suffering due to closeness to loathsome people</i>	Foes can be encountered like a thorn in the side.
8	<i>Suffering due to the intensity of the five aggregates</i>	The five aggregates cause distress, burning like fire, setting on fire the body and mind. (All forms of suffering from the former seven listed above belong to this group.)

TABLE 7: THE EIGHT SUFFERINGS (*BAKU* 八苦)

Of the eight forms of suffering, the first four belong to the physical body (arise due to the physical body), while the latter three belong to the mind (arise due to the mind). The last form of suffering (the eighth) encompasses both the body and the mind. Furthermore, the first four forms of suffering are specific (*bie* 別), each denoting only one specific suffering, which is the result of the past. The last (the eighth) form of suffering is general (*zong* 總), combining both the sufferings of the body and the mind. It is the movements and workings of the mind, which arise in the present, and cause not-yet-experienced suffering. Since causes and effects are linked together in

continuity and without interruptions, if suffering had no definite time, when would we liberate ourselves from it? If we practise in accordance with wisdom, we can attain liberation immediately.

There is also the suffering of three kinds of disaster,¹¹¹ eight difficult circumstances,¹¹² ten kinds of suffering, one hundred sufferings,¹¹³ and all the immeasurable kinds of suffering which cannot be enumerated in totality. However, why do we experience all of these sufferings? Tracing it back to the source: all living beings are deluded and cling to the five aggregates, maintaining that this illusory body and mind are a true self. This clinging makes us so fixed and stubborn that we cannot be changed. Eventually, because clinging towards self gives rise to attachment, the cause of suffering resides in not being able to clearly see that all the five aggregates are empty. Speaking more practically: the origin of suffering is the lack of understanding that the aggregates are unreal. It originates from *karma* generated by mental phenomena (*xiangxiang* 想相) which are conditioned by feelings (*shou*). Due to *karma* one becomes subject to the cycle of life and death, and because one is subject to the cycle of life and death, one experiences all forms of sufferings. The *bodhisattva* makes use of the wisdom (*prajñā*) of contemplating immaterial realms, recognises that the body and mind of five aggregates arise according to dependent origination and are thus without inherent self-nature, which means that their actual substance is empty. Thus, the *bodhisattva* has no clinging to an individual self and eliminates unwholesome *karma*. Unwholesome acts are the cause of suffering, the cycle of rebirth is the root of various kinds of suffering. Now, if there were no cause of suffering, then the cycle of life and death would be severed forever, and no more suffering experienced. Since there is no cause,

¹¹¹ *Sanzai* 三災, the three calamities include both major (*da* 大) and minor (*xiao* 小) ones, their appearance depends on the current world-period, that is the phase of the current world cycle. They all refer to major natural and other kinds of general disasters in the world, such as wars and other types of unrest.

¹¹² *Banan* 八難, the 'eight difficult circumstances' refer to conditions in which it is difficult to accept the teachings of the Buddha and proceed towards enlightenment.

¹¹³ Although Binzong says *shiku*, *baiku* 十苦, 百苦, which translates as 'ten sufferings, one hundred sufferings,' he probably meant *bai yi shi ku* 百一十苦, Sanskrit *daśottaraśatākāraṃ duḥkham*, the 110 types of suffering.

how can there be any result? Because a *bodhisattva* can recognise the emptiness of the five aggregates, they are also able to liberate themselves from all suffering. For example, [by recognising] the emptiness of the aggregate of materiality, one is able to liberate oneself from the first four of the eight kinds of suffering, which arise depending on the physical body. By recognising the emptiness of feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness, one can liberate oneself from the first four of the eight kinds of suffering that are generated in the mind. One ought to know that since the five aggregates are empty, mental distress such as greed and anger have no cause to arise. If this is the case, how can one create the causes of the five great violations (*pañcānantaryakarma*)¹¹⁴ and the ten evils of the three lower realms of rebirth? Thus, one not only liberates oneself from the sufferings of the human world, but also from the evil fruits of hell, being a hungry ghost, or animal in the three lower realms. Since one does not create any of the causes of evil, one does not suffer from painful fruits, and then all natural and man-made calamities can no longer bring suffering. This means that one becomes liberated from all suffering. The question is, how do vexations and various troubles arise from clinging to the five aggregates? This happens mainly due to the presence of mental defilements based on the three afflictions¹¹⁵ (one is deluded because of the defilements and cannot clearly see that the five aggregates are empty). All ordinary people are hindered from seeing and reflecting on their distresses, and thus generate clinging to a self within the domain of the five aggregates, the twelve sense bases (*shier ru* 十二入, *āyatana*), and the eighteen elements, incurring the suffering of incessant births and deaths. Moreover, the Two Vehicles¹¹⁶ are obscured by the

¹¹⁴ The term *pañcānantaryakarma* can also be translated as ‘five great misdeeds,’ referring to the five greatest moral offenses in Buddhist teachings. Different sources give different definitions of what these are, but generally speaking they include different kinds of homicide: patricide, matricide, killing an *arhat*, spilling the blood of a *buddha*, and causing schism in a Buddhist monastic community (Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 615-6).

¹¹⁵ In Tiantai Buddhism, these are: mental disturbances due to incorrect views and thoughts, mental disturbances caused by the details in the task of saving other beings (*bodhisattvas*), and epistemically arisen mental disturbances, which prevent us from understanding reality. Otherwise, the term *sanhuo* 三惑 might also denote the three basic afflictions of craving, anger, and ignorance.

¹¹⁶ Binzhong uses the term ‘Two Vehicles’ (*ercheng* 二乘) to refer to *śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha*. Otherwise, the term is also used in reference to the *Hīnayāna* in general.

defilements of dust and sand, giving rise to clinging to the wrong conception of emptiness of the four noble truths and the twelve *nidāna*. The expedient teaching taught by a *bodhisattva* is obscured by the defilement of ignorance, which in turn gives rise to illusory clinging to all *dharma*s within the six *pāramitā*s because of which miraculous transformative birth-and-death (*bianyi shengsi*) is incurred. Now, we have clearly understood that the *bodhisattva*'s practice of the profound perfection of wisdom encompasses a clear understanding of the emptiness of the five aggregates, the four truths, the twelve causes and conditions as well as all *dharma*s of the six *pāramitā*s which they know to all be empty. This is the principle, which in this *sūtra* is referred to as:

no materiality ... wisdom or attainment within emptiness.

The present *sūtra*, for reasons of brevity, speaks about seeing clearly the five aggregates. In principle,¹¹⁷ it ought to speak about seeing clearly that the five aggregates and so on—which

equal the eighteen elements, the four noble truths about the twelve causes and conditions, and the attainment of wisdom

—are all empty. It is only in accordance with the subsequent text that the idea that emptiness is formless (immaterial) corresponds with the idea that in emptiness there is no wisdom and no attainment. Here, the author has therefore used beforehand ‘all forms of suffering’ in reference to all of the above listed omitted aspects. Otherwise, ‘all forms of suffering’ would be only used to refer to delimited birth-and-death and nothing else. For this reason, this would not agree with the meaning of *prajñā* in Mahāyāna doctrine. According to the translation by the Venerable Yijing, the words ‘and so on’ (*deng* 等) ought to be added following the words ‘saw clearly that the five aggregates.’ The Tang Dynasty Master Kuiji's *Comprehensive commentary on the Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* (*Xinjing youzan* 心經幽贊) as well as Jingmai's *Annotated Heart sūtra* (*Xinjing shu* 心經疏) both contain the character *deng* 等. This is a fact worth studying. If deluded minds¹¹⁸ within the six destinies¹¹⁹ are resolved by penetrating into

¹¹⁷ *Juli* 據理 means ‘according to reason’; in Buddhist usage, it can be translated as ‘according to correct principles’ or ‘in principle.’

¹¹⁸ *Miqing* 迷情 means ‘deluded minds’ or ‘deluded sentient beings.’

¹¹⁹ *Liudao* 六道, ‘six destinies’ or the six kinds of rebirth in *saṃsāra*.

the emptiness of the twelve sense fields (*shier ru* 十二入)¹²⁰ through the five aggregates and the components of cognition (*jie* 界; *shiba jie* 十八界 eighteen elements, i.e., six senses, six objects of senses, and six consciousness)¹²¹ then mistaken views and thoughts all cease to exist. Consequently, one is liberated from delimited life and death, the four truths and dependent origination appear empty, and one's dependence on the views of the Two Vehicles are all forgotten. Then, the delusions of sand and dust cease. When there is no knowledge and no attainment (*wuzhi wude* 無智無得) *bodhisattvas* come to existence in the ten directions of the world, and the supreme perfect enlightenment (*anuttarasamyaksambodhi*) of all *buddhas* of the three worlds is realised, the delusion of ignorance ceases, and one is liberated from rebirth. When the three delusions completely cease and the two deaths¹²² are gone forever, what other sufferings are there that can still be spoken about? Thus, mental afflictions are like darkness and *prajñā* is like candlelight. The light of a candle illuminates the darkness which vanishes from everywhere, and so the light of *prajñā* eliminates all confusions. The three delusions are the root from which *karma* is created and suffering and pain experienced. Now, since the roots of suffering are all extinguished, the fruits also disappear by themselves, so that all sufferings are naturally overcome, and none remains. In summary, those who are deluded and give rise to greed and aversion due to erroneously regarding all appearances as real, are called ordinary people. They experience all kinds of sufferings. But those who are awakened, seeing clearly that all *dharma*s are empty, are *bodhisattvas* who have neither clinging nor attachment. Therefore, a *bodhisattva* is free from any form of suffering.

¹²⁰ This passage is relatively difficult to understand in its original form. Binzong plays with different levels of meaning of Chinese when, for instance, he says: *ru* (*shierru*) *kong* 入 (十二) 空. If interpreted literally, this means entering (*ru* 入) emptiness (*kong* 空), while in the context of Buddhist terminology this means that 'the twelve sense fields are empty/emptied.'

¹²¹ The term *shiba jie* 十八界 can be translated as 'eighteen compositional elements of cognition,' a collective term for the six sense faculties (*liugen* 六根), six sense objects (*liuchen* 六塵), and six consciousnesses (*liushi* 六識).

¹²² *Ersi* 二死, on the meaning of this term, see the above annotation on the 'two kinds of death.'

To summarise, contemplation through *prajñā* is wisdom, while the world of objects and states (*jing* 境) is what is regarded as the five aggregates. Contemplative cultivation results in seeing emptiness, the benefits thus obtained are ease and liberation from all suffering.

Now, I would like to give a very simple metaphor, the real nature (*shixiang*) of the mind (*xin*) is like a bright full moon in the sky, while the five aggregates are like its reflection in water. An ignorant child might not know that the moon is actually in the sky, believing instead that it is in the water. Therefore, giving rise to greed and craving, they would take a fishing rod and try to fish the moon out of the water. However, they would not only not be able to do so, but would also be in danger of slipping and falling into the deep water (referring here to suffering). This metaphor describes an ignorant ordinary person, who is not aware of their inherently possessed *buddha*-nature and falsely believes that the illusory *dharma*s of the five aggregates is their real self, and thereby creates *karma* and suffering as a consequence (*zao ye shou bao* 造業受報). An adult, on the other hand, will know that the beautiful (*keai* 可愛, ‘lovable’) moon is in fact in the sky, and that they are able to wander free and unfettered in the moonlight, enjoying in serene appreciation. How delightful this is. In this way, an adult would be completely safe from all dangers [of falling into the water] (i.e., free from all suffering). Metaphorically this refers to the *bodhisattva* practising the profound perfection of wisdom, being able to overcome all suffering by clearly seeing the emptiness of the aggregates. To give another analogy, the fabricated five aggregates resemble the mountains, rivers, and things depicted in maps and pictures, or the various nobles, generals, and ministers acting in theatre plays. A sage understands that a painting is only provisional and hypothetical, and that the characters in the plays are only acting, so they naturally would not believe these to be actual things and persons. In doing so, they give rise both to affirmation as well as negation (*sheng shi sheng fei* 生是生非) [of these characters’ existence]). A foolish person, however, will regard everything as true, give rise to deluded clinging, confused about what is and what is not (*shifei* 是非). The sage is a metaphor for the *bodhisattva*, who possesses superb wisdom, owing to which they can clearly see that the

five aggregates are, in fact, all empty. The fool, on the other hand, is a metaphor for a deluded ordinary person, who due to lack of wisdom, gives rise to wrong attachment to the illusory *dharmas* of the five aggregates, wrongly creating bad *karma* and receiving painful retribution, and therefore experiencing all kinds of suffering.

II Synthetic explanation. The mind and body, composed of the five aggregates, are the chief roots for all living beings' creation of *karma* and their experience of various kinds of suffering. Since [the *bodhisattva*] has now seen them as empty, there is no more suffering, which is why it was said that he was liberated from suffering. In this way, the fourth point has been explored extensively (here ends the synthetic explanation of **B1**).

C2 Detailed explanation of the true meaning of the genuine emptiness of prajñā

D5 Extinguishing grasping

In the above section, we have explained the principle of the emptiness of the five aggregates. Now, we shall more broadly elaborate on the three methods of contemplation for extinguishing grasping.

Shelizi! Se bu yi kong, kong bu yi se, se ji shi kong, kong ji shi se; shou xiang xing shi, yi fu rushi.

舍利子！色不異空，空不異色；色即是空，空即是色；受想行識，亦復如是。

Śāriputra! Materiality differs not from emptiness, and emptiness differs not from materiality. Materiality is emptiness, and emptiness is materiality. Sensing, perceiving, volition, and consciousness are all like this.

Śāriputra is the name of the interlocutor in this *sūtra*. Before the Buddha expounded the Dharma to the *bodhisattva* Guanzizai, he addressed other disciples, aiming to comprehensively explain to others the profound meaning of *prajñā*. Because only a person of unsurpassed wisdom would understand the Dharma, he called for the wisest amongst his disciples, Śāriputra, and explained it to him. According to Dharmacandra's translation:

Thus, when the *bodhisattva* Guanzizai was practising the profound perfection of *prajñā*, cultivating *samādhi* [concentrated meditation], he saw clearly that the self-natures of the five aggregates are all empty... upon awakening from *samādhi*, he reported to Śāriputra, who was renowned for his wisdom. The *bodhisattva* had the mind of the *prajñā pāramitā*... you now listen carefully and think deeply about it. I will explain to you all its different aspects.

I Analytic explanation. *Shelizi* 舍利子 (the son Sheli) is a personal name, namely Shelifu 舍利弗 who was a Master from Brāhmaṇatissa in southern India; his courtesy title was Upatiṣya [*youbotishe* 優波提舍], alias Śāriputra [*Shelifu*]. The term *putra* (*fū* 弗) is a Sanskrit word meaning son (*zi* 子), while *sheli* 舍利 is in Sanskrit *śāri* ‘bird’; put together, the meaning of his name is ‘the son of *śāri*[*kā*].’ What we now call *Shelizi* 舍利子 is thus a name combining Chinese and Sanskrit terms. *Śāri* is an Indian bird, which has beautiful eyes. Because his mother had eyes just like this bird, she was called Śārikā, in honour of his mother, he was named Śāriputra (i.e., the son of Śāri[kā]).

In the sentence *se bu yi kong* 色不異空, the character *se* 色 refers to all kinds of phenomena of the physical universe. In *bu yi* 不異, the character *yi* 異, aside from meaning ‘all’ can also be translated as *li* 離 (to separate). The character *kong* 空 (emptiness) has two meanings, both of which have been discussed above. Now, we shall first summarise the meaning of these four sentences.

Dependently arisen appearances are called *se* 色 (materiality), and the nonself-nature of dependent arising is called *kong* 空 (emptiness). Although having provisional appearances, materialities have no real substance, which is why it is said that they ‘do not differ/are not separated from (*bu yi* 不異) emptiness. Although so-called materiality (*se*) is clearly manifested, it has no real substance, which is why it is pointed out that ‘materiality does not differ from emptiness.’ Although it has no real substance, it can still be clearly manifested, which is why it is pointed out that ‘emptiness does not differ from materiality.’ All *dharmas* of materiality arise from the accumulation of causes, and have no self-nature; therefore, emptiness does not occur after materiality is extinguished, but during its existence that materiality itself is nothing but an illusory appearance, since it has no substance and is thus empty, which is why it is also said that ‘materiality is emptiness.’ Since myriads of *dharmas* of materiality have an empty nature and arise as illusions, it is their empty nature which serves as the main substance of all *dharmas* of materiality; this is why it is also said that

‘emptiness is materiality.’ The above interpretation is given in regard to the empty nature of dependently arisen phenomena

((1) *Dharmas* ‘arisen’ by means (*yin* 因) of combination of ‘conditions’ (*yuan* 緣) are all without self-‘nature’ (*xing* 性). Because their substance is fundamentally ‘empty’ (*kong*), it is therefore posited that dependently arisen phenomena are empty by nature. Here, the character *kong* 空 should be explained as fabricated and unreal.

(2) ‘Dependently arisen’ (*yuanqi* 緣起) *dharmas* means that they have arisen from true emptiness, which serves as their substance; their ‘nature’ is true ‘emptiness’ (*kong*). Consequently, it is said that dependently arisen phenomena are empty in nature. Here, *kong* 空 refers to true emptiness. We shall now adopt the interpretation of emptiness of illusory phenomena).

What is meant by ‘dependently arisen’? What is meant by ‘empty of nature’? All things in this world arise as combinations of their respective causes and conditions (*yuan* 緣), and are called ‘dependently arisen.’ Since all things are produced depending on causes and supported by conditions, there exists no permanent individual. For this reason, we speak about the emptiness of nature. Only because things have no permanent self-nature can they be combined, under specific conditions, to form different kinds of things; for example, by burning, wood turns into coal, and by being fired in a kiln, mud turns into bricks or tiles. If all things had their own self-nature, they would be eternal and unchanging. But since they have no such self-nature, they cannot be eternal and unchanging. Because they have no self-nature, they can be dependently arisen, and because of dependent arising they are spoken of as empty of nature. This is the reasoning behind the four sentences, beginning with ‘materiality differs not from emptiness’ and so on. In essence, we can say, arisen through dependent origination yet empty of nature ‘materiality does not differ from emptiness.’ About self-nature and dependently arisen materiality we can say, ‘emptiness does not differ from materiality.’ As for what is dependently arisen and has no self-nature we can say, ‘materiality is emptiness.’ While according to dependent origination emptiness is the main substance of dependent origination, we can say

‘emptiness is materiality.’ Dependent origination is thus nature-less (existing yet nonexistent) and materiality does not differ from emptiness; nature-less dependent origination (empty yet nonempty) means emptiness differs not from materiality. Dependently arisen yet nature-less, nature-less yet dependently arisen (both existent and empty) — materiality is emptiness, emptiness is materiality (here, the meaning of emptiness is explained as fabricated and unreal).

The [Chinese translation of] the *Mādhyamaka-śāstra* (*Zhonglun* 中論) says:

There never existed a single *dharma*, which has not arisen through dependent origination (dependently arisen). Therefore, all *dharma*s are empty (empty of nature). Because they are empty, all *dharma*s are created (since they are dependently arisen, they are empty of self-nature). If they were not empty, then all *dharma*s would be noncreated (to be empty of nature means dependently arisen).

This verse (*gāthā*) could be called uncovering the secret of the emptiness of dependently arisen phenomena. What is arisen from dependent origination cannot be separated from its empty nature, because its empty nature can manifest the provisional appearances of everything that exists; materiality thus cannot be separated (*li* 離) from emptiness, the emptiness of materiality also cannot be separated from all existing phenomena; without the existence of all phenomena one would not be able to point out the emptiness of nature — emptiness is not separate from materiality. The *Great perfection of wisdom-sūtra* says:

When a *bodhisattva mahāsattva* practises the profound perfection of wisdom, they should not seek it in materiality (materiality differs not from emptiness), nor should they seek it in feeling, perception, volition, or consciousness (feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness differ not from emptiness), they should not seek it separated [outside] of materiality (materiality is emptiness), nor seek it in feeling, perception, volition, or consciousness (feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness are emptiness).

All living beings confuse the five aggregates with the body and mind, being unable to realise that all dependently arisen phenomena are empty of nature and consequently they generate the overflow of defilements originating from

the karmic fruits of dependent origination, resulting in endless cycles of life and death. If one is grounded in the contemplation of *prajñā*, then one can overcome and liberate oneself from the cycle of life and death.

The four sentences of this *sūtra*, beginning with ‘materiality differs not from emptiness’ etc., were explained above in regard to the empty nature of dependent origination. This can be stated in terms of true *thusness* (*tathātā*), the genuine emptiness of true nature of dependent origination: true *thusness* is the universal sameness of the Dharma realm (*fajie pingdeng* 法界平等), meaning that everything that exists in the universe is one large system of dependent origination. True *thusness* is hence the appearance of everything that exists in the universe, generated by the movement of the true *thusness* of *dharma* within a single mind moment, while the arising of everything relies on the true nature of *thusness* as original substance. In this way, true *thusness* is the subject of dependent arising, while ‘all existing things’ refers to the object of dependent arising. True *thusness*, which is the subject of dependent arising, moves completely as one with the substance¹²³ that is, it becomes the dependently arisen myriad forms of existence. Since all *dharma*s depend on true *thusness*, everything that exists in this universe is, without exception, merely a phenomenon that takes form (materiality) on the substance of true *thusness*. What serves as substance is nothing else but true *thusness*. On the other hand, the nature of true *thusness* is the original substance of everything that exists in the universe, while the arising and movement of its nature is not separated from phenomena. As for the question, how can the body and mind, comprised of the five aggregates, escape and be exempt [from material existence], it must be emphasised that all are forms of phenomena appearing over the substance of true *thusness*. Therefore, their substance is true emptiness. Although shapes and appearances are subject to impermanence, birth and decay, their substance is nevertheless permanent and unchanging. Every kind of possible manifestation is regarded in terms of existence and physical appearance, while true *thusness* is regarded from the perspective of the trueness of the substance of its nature. It is absolutely the same as the principle of the nature of true *thusness*, which is neither born

¹²³ *Juti yidong* 舉體一動, *juti* means ‘fully’ or ‘move with the whole body,’ *yidong*, on the other hand, means ‘move as one.’

nor perishes. It serves eternally as the original substance, on which the manifestations of all existing things rely. According to this, true *thusness* is not an entirely different thing from all existing things. We must only affirm that what serves as the substance of illusory appearances is true *thusness*.

If we have understood the above discussion, then everything that exists in the universe ultimately cannot have isolated existence, separated from true *thusness*, just as the myriad things cannot exist separately from emptiness. Because so-called dependently arisen phenomena are not separated from true *thusness*, we say that materiality differs not from emptiness. On the other hand, being identical to true *thusness* also does not prevent the myriad forms of existence acting in accordance with causes and conditions, just as all-embracing emptiness does not prevent the arising of all the manifestations of nature. Because true *thusness* does not hinder dependent arising, we say that emptiness differs not from form. Since the arising of all existing things depends on true *thusness*, and their substance is true *thusness*, it is therefore said that materiality is emptiness. Since true *thusness* is what the myriad existing things are based on, it is the original substance of all existing things, we say that emptiness is materiality. In brief, everything that exists is grounded in true *thusness* — materiality differs not from emptiness; true *thusness* is what the myriad existences depend on, emptiness differs not from materiality; what serves as the substance of the myriad existences is true emptiness; materiality is emptiness, and true emptiness is the original substance of the myriad existing things. The Tang Dynasty translation of the *Treatise of the awakening of faith* (*Qixin lun* 起信論, *Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda-śāstra*) says:

All *dharma*s differ not from true *thusness*.

In turn, this can be reformulated, saying that the five aggregates differ not from true *thusness*, true *thusness* differs not from the five aggregates, the five aggregates are true *thusness*, and true *thusness* is the five aggregates. In this way we show that true *thusness* is the true nature of all *dharma*s (in the above paragraph the term ‘ultimate emptiness’ is used to denote the genuine emptiness of true nature).

The two ‘differs not’ sentences can be explained in the context of eliminating clinging, namely eliminating past perceptions and thoughts, in turn, we can

discuss the two ‘is’ sentences in terms of a way forward, that is transforming and setting down new contemplations (*guannian* 觀念). Because of ‘not differentiating’ (*buyi* 不異) [from emptiness], materialities are able to separate themselves from all appearances (it means not clinging to all *dharmas*). Because of their ‘being the same’ (*jishi* 即是), they can be all *dharmas*. The *Diamond-sūtra* says:

What [the Buddha] called ‘all *dharmas*’ are not ‘all *dharmas*’ (negating distinction). That is why he called them ‘all *dharmas*’ (affirming reality).

The *Madhyamaka-sāstra* says:

I say that the *dharmas* arisen through dependent origination are empty (this means that they are not different [from emptiness]), while at the same time they are also called ‘provisional names’ and the meaning of the middle way.

Thus, we have given a thorough explanation for the reasons for using ‘not different’ (*bu yi*) and ‘identical’ (*jishi*) in the above statements. Moreover, the sentences ‘materiality is emptiness,’ and ‘emptiness is materiality,’ are in fact identical in meaning to

there is no mind outside *dharma* and no *dharma* outside the mind;
[it is] abiding by the causes, remains unchanged, and remaining unchanged while following conditions.

Because there is no *dharma* outside the mind, we say that emptiness is materiality, and because there is no mind outside Dharma, we say that materiality is emptiness. Because abiding by the flow of causes is constant, we say that materiality is emptiness, and because remaining unchanged is following conditions, we say that emptiness is materiality. Furthermore, ‘materiality differs not from emptiness’ means the ‘nonexistence of appearances’; ‘emptiness does not differ from materiality’ refers to the ‘non-nonexistence of appearances.’ Hence, materiality is emptiness, and emptiness is materiality, it is both the nonappearance of Dharma as well as non-nonappearance of Dharma.

In summary, what is explained above is the principle of the nonseparation of nature and appearances (*xiang* 相), and the nonduality of emptiness and existence. The firstly illustrated ‘nondifference’ is meant in the sense of the gradual attainment of enlightenment. Because it is expounded in relation to

nondifference, it is shown that materiality and emptiness are not two things, but are of the same nature. Thereby, ‘being identical’ can be explained as denoting the meaning of perfection. It means that materiality and emptiness make up one whole, there is no duality, no difference between them. Only such an understanding represents the *prajñā* of unsurpassed emptiness. From the perspective of the *prajñā* of contemplation, it is by knowing the true appearance of all *dharma*s and seeing that their actual substance is true *thusness*, that the *bodhisattva*¹²⁴ is ultimately liberated. If, however, we are confused about the rational principles and consequently pursue the realm of birth and death being deluded and forming strong attachments, it is called eternally sinking in this-worldly existence (*changchu chenlun* 長處沈淪)¹²⁵ for ordinary people.

As its cardinal objective, this version of the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* sets out only the *prajñā* of contemplation, while it still regards *prajñā* of the real nature of things as its aim, which is why it further necessitates an elaboration of the three forms of contemplation.

Ordinary people are not aware of the principle of the empty nature of dependently arisen phenomena and thus form strong attachments to different aspects of those. It is for this reason that contemplation on emptiness is applied, which leads to the profound understanding that the substance of all *dharma*s is empty. We, therefore, say that materiality does not differ from emptiness. This is the principle of combining functions to return to the substance.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Evidently, Binzong follows the Tiantai view that a *bodhisattva* is challenged by the three forms of doubts or confusions, which entails the existence of different levels of *bodhisattva*-hood, where the initial attainment of the awareness of a *bodhisattva* still takes place in the context of the ‘Two Vehicles.’

¹²⁵ In the entire text of the commentary, Binzong uses two versions of this phrase. The second being, *changci chenlun* 長此沈淪. According to my understanding, both refer to permanent sinking or the state of being constantly immersed in ‘this place,’ that is this-worldly, unenlightened existence. ‘Sinking’ as a metaphor is related to established Buddhist imagery, which includes the ‘sea of sorrow and suffering,’ ‘the other shore of enlightenment,’ ‘the raft of the teaching’ etc.

¹²⁶ For a reader not acquainted with modern Chinese Buddhist philosophy, this phrase is relatively difficult to understand. When Binzong says *sheyong guiti* 攝用歸體, he refers

Although practitioners of the Two Vehicles of Buddhism are able to thoroughly understand the principle that all *dharma*s are empty and are free from clinging to self, they still cling to emptiness. They drink the wine of *samādhi* and fall into the pit of the unconditioned (*wuwei* 無為, *asaṃskṛta*), while they single-mindedly indulge in emptiness and sluggishly reside in tranquillity; they view the three realms like a prison, regard all living beings as enemies, and do not wish to go out and assist living beings to reach liberation, but instead only look after themselves, wanting to attain *arhat*-hood on their own. It is needless to discuss these things in the context of the superior way of the Supreme Vehicle, the Mahāyāna. Therefore, the Buddha frequently mentioned that the:

to a profound philosophical concept which derives from the binary category function-substance in traditional Chinese philosophy, it represents one of the key concepts of Xiong Shili's theory of the new Consciousness Only philosophy, which Xiong described in his similarly titled book, the *New theory of Consciousness Only* and the *Evolution of heaven and earth* (*Qian-kun yan* 乾坤衍) from the early 1930s. Amongst other things, Xiong remarked:

Integrating function to return to the substance is like the Buddha's return to *nirvāṇa*. Its opposite, 'integrating substance to return to function,' is defined in the following way: it is then [the principle] that all things have origins within themselves. Since they are true and not false, they are in constant change driven by themselves (*ziran* 自然), which is the reason the creation of everything never ceases ... Accumulating substance and returning to function is thus to integrate true substance and return it back to everything (Xiong Shili 熊十力. 1961: 39).

According to Xiong:

The Buddha took function and integrated it back into substance, that is, in so doing he eliminated functions, recognizing only the unborn and imperishable true substance (*shiti* 實體) (Xiong Shili 熊十力, 1961: 38).

He further remarked that:

In *she su gui zhen* 攝俗歸真, *zhen* 真 means true substance; *su* 俗 refers to the this-worldly; the Buddha taught that all beings exist in a state of confusion and distorted views (*diandao* 顛倒), forming mistaken attachments to this world. Because they are confused about everything, they cannot relinquish their state of existence (Xiong Shili 熊十力, 1961: 39).

This is the simplest and most superficial explanation of the term in Xiong Shili's usage, readers proficient in Chinese can consult Xiong's work *Evolution of heaven and earth*.

Withered sprouts and the seeds of defeat will never stand a chance of reaching *buddha*-hood.

Now, we shall reflect on this from the perspective of the contemplation of provisional truths, this enables us to understand true emptiness because the substance of all things does not exist outside and separately from all appearances. Since this is the case, there is no harm to regard the true emptiness within all appearances. It is therefore said that emptiness does not differ from materiality. This is the principle of function which arises from substance.

Although [by virtue of the] expedient teaching, a *bodhisattva* is capable of entering into emptiness and realising the way of *bodhisattva*-hood and exiting [emptiness] to enter provisional existence to help living beings, it is only that just when the *bodhisattva* enters emptiness, if he holds that there actually exist beings that can be saved,¹²⁷ then this is a form of clinging [the idea of] saving beings.¹²⁸ If the Dharma of emptiness has not yet been transcended, we are not able to completely integrate the arising of the middle way. However, if we illuminate it with the contemplation of the middle path, then we no longer cling to emptiness, and realise the way. At the same time, we are also capable of temporarily exiting into provisional existence to help living beings. One is thus capable of not residing in phenomena and appearances when exiting to help living beings, while concurrently also entering emptiness and realising the way. Being able to enter without entering into appearances, and exit without leaving appearances behind, and seeing both that emptiness is not empty and the provisional is nonprovisional, this means that materiality and emptiness are equal, and one cannot view

¹²⁷ In the Tiantai teaching, the so-called ‘provisional’ or ‘expedient teaching’ (*quanjiao* 權教) is considered to represent the stage of merely partial attainment of *bodhisattva*-hood. In this sense, a *bodhisattva* who has mastered the provisional teaching is not, so to say, someone who has fully mastered the path of the *bodhisattva* and reaped the fruits of its enlightenment. In the above passage, a novice *bodhisattva* experiences difficulties when immersing themselves into emptiness, for at that time there still exists something, a principle of emptiness, which still is realizable (*you li ke zheng* 有理可證).

¹²⁸ This sentence refers to the ‘provisional teaching’ of a novice *bodhisattva*, who is thus said to still cling to, let us say, the idea of ‘witnessing the truth’ or ‘realizing the way’ (*zhengdao* 證道). More particularly, in this case the realized way pertains to the undertaking of a *bodhisattva* entering emptiness.

them as different.¹²⁹ What serves as substance is then emptiness (materiality differs not from emptiness, this is provisional; materiality differs not from emptiness, this is the middle) materiality is emptiness and emptiness is materiality.

Although liberating beings is present in all their thoughts, the *bodhisattva* knows that there are no such beings that need saving. Although a *bodhisattva* is engaged in single-minded pursuit of *buddha*-hood, they recognize no existence of such pursuable *buddha*-hood. In this way, realisation or liberation does not exist, however, the *bodhisattva* will be ultimately thus liberated and [*buddha*-hood] will be attained. Emptiness and the provisional are thus in perfect harmony with each other, and there is no obstruction between materiality and emptiness. Therefore, we say that materiality is emptiness and emptiness is materiality. This is the principle of harmonious fusion of substance and materiality, of the nonduality of materiality and emptiness. That is to know only the truth of everything.

If we want to know whether materiality differs from emptiness, we will not understand subtle substance. If emptiness [only] differed from materiality, then we would not understand subtle function. If materiality and emptiness were not identical, then the substance and function would be separated from each other and would not be able to completely integrate. When we reside in materiality, we can follow conditions while remaining unmoved, and when we reside in emptiness, we are able to remain unmoved while following conditions. Although we make use of materiality, we are, at the same time, able to forget materiality. Although we realise emptiness, we are still able to forget emptiness. This leads to the emergence of seeking emptiness by not-separating oneself from materiality, and to discard the ailments of materiality by clinging to emptiness. In this way, we are in accord with the *prajñā* of the true nature of things. To summarise, we call emptiness the unsurpassable state, while in the case that something can be surpassed, we called it provisional. If we are able to surpass the dwelling in the two extremes

¹²⁹ The original reads: *nenggou ru wu ru xiang, chu wu chu xiang, kong ji bu kong, jia ye fei jia* 能夠入無入相，出無出相，空既不空，假亦非假。

(emptiness and the provisional), then this is named the mean or the middle (*zhong* 中). The *Shizhong xinyao* 始終心要 explains:

the absolute truth (*paramārtha*) obliterates all *dharmas* (reflecting on emptiness). Conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*) sets down all *dharmas* (reflecting on the provisional [truth]). The truth of the mean unifies all *dharmas* (reflecting on the mean).

When we speak about the principle of attainment of innate virtues, it means the three truths (*sandi* 三諦); when we speak about the wisdom of cultivating virtues, it means the three contemplations. If we live without contemplation on emptiness, then how can we discover the original substance of the dharma-body? How can we free ourselves from the vulgar and enter the way? If we live without the contemplation of provisional truth, then how can we reveal the subtle function of the dharma-body and enter the world with the aim of liberating living beings? If we do not cultivate the contemplation of the mean, then how can we reveal the nonduality of substance and function for the dharma-body, get free from the ideas of the two extremes, and realise the perfection of the middle way? The three contemplations are unattainable yet conceivable.

So far, we have first indicated that the proposition that materiality does not differ from emptiness eliminates self-clinging, which is maintained by ordinary people and is also present in the contemplation on emptiness. Subsequently, it has been pointed out that the view that emptiness does not differ from materiality breaks away from the clinging to the *dharmas* of emptiness as practiced by the Two Vehicles, and that this should be practiced only as a provisional teaching. Although we have expounded on the principle of the nonseparation and nondifferentiation between materiality and emptiness, our particular concern has been the inability to completely integrate the two and mutually equate them. Therefore, we have also expounded on the subtle principle of the middle way, that materiality is emptiness and emptiness is materiality, with the aim to break away from clinging to the duality of emptiness and the provisional manifestation in the teaching of a *bodhisattva*, so that the practitioner can cultivate the middle way. These principles of materiality differing not from emptiness etc. are all very profound, yet they are still very easily explainable using analogies.

Let us, for example, say that there is someone, who manufactures objects from gold (gold is a metaphor for true emptiness and the object is a metaphor for materiality). There are differences between the different forms, the appearance of things made of gold such as hairpins, bracelets and necklaces. Although they are all of the same materiality, they have no [separate] substance of their own. How do we account for that? Because they have been all separated from the fundamental, this was not accounted for. But although their appearances are provisional, their substance is still only gold. From this perspective, we are not only unable to discard the gold while exploring the existence of these golden objects elsewhere, but at the same time we also cannot destroy all golden objects while seeking the original substance of gold elsewhere. While what we ought to do, however, is to recognise gold in its products and equate them with gold. If, in wanting to recognize the equality of different manifestations of gold, we do not get rid of clinging to the different appearances of the products, then the view that all products are gold arises from the distortion of right and wrong, where there is no distinction between gold and its products. By understanding this, we can say, the objects differ not from gold (because products have no substance on their own and are created depending on gold), while gold does not differ from the products (because gold serves as the original substance of the products), the products are gold (the products are made out of gold, which serves as their substance), the gold is the products (because gold is what the products are based on, it is their original substance). We can also adopt the analogy of rippling waves on water, where the waves are the metaphor for materiality, water represents emptiness. Since the waves are made of water, which makes water their substance, then waves differ not from water. Since water represents the substance of the waves and is their entire appearance, then water does not differ from the waves. In this way, waves are water and water is waves. Since we know that waves are water, then we do not have to stick to waves when seeking water. Since we know that water is waves, we are likely to see water when seeking for waves. When the wind stirs up a wave, its entire body is made of water; until the wave has resettled, its substance is entirely made up of water. When one is aware of this principle, materiality and emptiness are in harmony and do not obstruct each other. They are identical and not separated from each other.

When the water encounters the wind, a wave arises; when the mind follows causation, this gives rise to materiality; waves are illusory appearances, which arise and perish, and are thus impermanent; being their original substance; water is profound and unchanging; although the waves are illusory, their substance is still water. This is an example which can be made in order to understand the principles of materiality and the mind.

All living beings' confusion and clinging to the false is akin to obscuring the existence of water in pursuit of waves. Consequently, one abides with *karma* entrapped in unceasing *samsāra* within the six realms of existence. All *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, on the other hand, attain the true by understanding the false, which can be compared to knowing that waves are water, and consequently life in the ten realms is revealed in correspondence with dependent arising, and thus made without impediment.

Without troubling the reader too much, we shall now give a most pertinent and plain explanation, materiality is matter and emptiness refers to the spirit.¹³⁰ Matter cannot be separated from the subjective agency (*zhuti* 主體)

¹³⁰ Here, it needs to be pointed out that 'spirit' is not an original Buddhist category, which does not however mean that the notion or the term of 'spirit' was not introduced into Buddhist traditions outside the Indian subcontinent. In the intellectual context of post-1949 Taiwan, within which Master Binzong wrote his 'popular' version of this explanation of the *sūtra*, the term *jingshen* 精神 'spirit' represented a commonly recognized category rooted in Chinese tradition. While in the above text, the term 'spirit' could also be understood in its modern sense, in the context of Buddhist philosophy its meaning would imply something comparatively narrower in sense. While the Chinese term *jingshen* must be translated as 'spirit,' its meaning in the above text ought to be understood as describing either human consciousness or the noncorporeal mind, which survives physical death and is thus the subject of rebirth. However, because Binzong not only operates with the usual Buddhist terminology for various kinds of consciousness and is moreover strongly influenced by the new Yogācāra movement in Chinese philosophy, it is almost certain that the term *jingshen* in the above text denotes the second meaning, that is a conscious entity that transcends physical existence in a single lifetime. If, however, the term is to be understood in connection to its traditional Chinese meaning and various connotations, then it needs to be pointed out that the latter must not be simply equated with either ancient Greek or later western Judeo-Christian notions of 'spirit.' In this sense, 'spirit' does not imply Western 'spirituality' but rather refers to a principally ontological concept, which does not entail a relationship of exclusion between 'matter' and 'spiritual agency,' but rather a relationship of complementarity. In relation to 'matter,' *jingshen*

of the ‘spirit’¹³¹ — materiality does not differ from emptiness; on the other hand, spirit can also not be separated from the functions (*zuoyong* 作用) of matter — emptiness does not differ from materiality. Matter ‘is’ the utility of the spirit — materiality is emptiness, while the spirit ‘is’ what controls¹³² matter — emptiness is materiality. How can these two be separated and how can their connection be severed? It must be borne in mind that by lacking matter, we have lost the functions of reality, and by lacking spirit, we have lost the activity of thought. The so-called pair of matter and spirit are only complete if they are regarded with utmost care. Indeed, we cannot partially stress only the external material aspect and underestimate and ignore the spirit and ideas. Concurrently, we cannot however overemphasise the inner spiritual-ideal aspect, while underestimating the material aspect. Light moves depending on matter, otherwise it would be absolutely impossible to be active in society only using spirit and thought. Also, without preserving the spirit, the physical body would also lose its master. Without the physical body as its servant, the spirit would also lose its function. Hence, the spirit and body are closely related to each other. The principle that materiality differs not from emptiness; emptiness differs not from materiality is exactly like that.

could also be translated as ‘essence.’ This meaning, however, would not fit into Binzong’s statements such as:

without preserving the spirit, the physical body would also lose its master. Without the physical body as its servant, the spirit would also lose its function.

Alternatively, to cover all possible implications, the term could also be rendered in the form ‘spirit/essence.’

¹³¹ While the original reads ‘the subject of spirit’ or ‘spiritual subject’ (*jingshen de zhuti* 精神的主體), I believe that the meaning is closer to ‘subjective agency.’ The latter term referring to the subjective sphere of the spirit that influences or defines matter in different ways.

¹³² The term here is *tongyuzhe* 統御者 (the one who controls). It is evident that these ideas must have been derived from the context of Chinese traditional philosophy and modern philosophical fusions with scientific philosophy. It is very likely that Binzong was influenced by Master Taixu’s ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ (*renjian fojiao* 人間佛教), which at the time when this commentary was composed had already become the mainstream modern Buddhist intellectual current in Taiwan. Readers interested in the broader intellectual context and background of this important current of modern Chinese Buddhism may further consult sources like Pacey (2014), Pittman (2001), and Ritzinger (2017).

Feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness are also as pointed out above. If we have been previously speaking about reflecting on the body, we are now speaking from the perspective of reflecting on the mind. Of the five aggregates, we shall first give the example of the aggregate of materiality, though the remaining four aggregates are also empty of substance. The aggregate of materiality is nothing but material phenomena, while the other four aggregates are all mental phenomena. Although human nature and matter differ from each other, their dependently arisen empty nature is the same. Because the remaining four aggregates also entail within them various causes and conditions. They are created from contact between the six sense organs and the six objects of feeling, and are basically without their own substance, which is why none of them differs from emptiness, and all of them are empty. This is the reason we asserted that feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness are also empty. More precisely said, feeling differs not from emptiness, and emptiness differs not from feeling; feeling is emptiness and emptiness is feeling. The same can also be said about perception, volition, and consciousness. As for the methods of contemplation, these also resemble the contemplation on the aggregate of materiality.

II Synthetic explanation Oh! Śāriputra! Material phenomena (materiality, *se* 色) that arise depending on empty illusions differ not from emptiness, and the emptiness which serves as the fundamental substance of material phenomena differs not from materiality. By the same token, the substance of matter is emptiness, while the manifestation of emptiness is matter. This concludes section D5 on extinguishing grasping.

D6 Revealing the true nature of things

Above, we have explained the method of contemplation for extinguishing grasping. If we want to get free from false appearances, we must first illuminate the true nature of things.

Shelizi! Shi zhu fa kong xiang: bu sheng bu mie, bu gou bu jing, bu zeng bu jian.

舍利子！是諸法空相：不生不滅，不垢不淨，不增不減。

Śāriputra, this is the inherent emptiness of all dharmas: they are neither born, nor cease to be, are neither defiled nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing.

I Analytic explanation: The text above talks about the principle of the nonduality of materiality and emptiness, which is the ground for eliminating all kinds of grasping and clinging. In this section, we shall further cast light on the nature of all *dharmas*. The *bodhisattva* said to Śāriputra in the sentence *shi zhufa kong xiang* 是諸法空相 the character *shi* 是 serves as an indicator, meaning ‘this.’ The phrase ‘all *dharmas* (*zhufa* 諸法)’ denotes the five aggregates, twelve sense bases, eighteen elements, twelve causes and conditions, four truths and so on. The word *kongxiang* 空相 is the genuine emptiness of true nature. This means that all *dharmas*, such as the five aggregates, are phenomena dependently arisen from true *thusness*, which means that their actual substance is the genuine emptiness of true nature. It is therefore said that ‘this is the inherent emptiness of all *dharmas*.’

The substance of the true nature of things (*shixiang*) is truly constant and unchanging: nothing can create it or give birth to it, spoil it or make it perish. Also, when clearly seen by means of *prajñā* it does not exist and cannot be regarded as perished. It is therefore described as neither born, nor ceasing to exist. The substance of the real nature of things is itself empty — it cannot be contaminated and thus defiled, it cannot be controlled and thus purified. Even were we to contaminate the basis of nature with evil causes and

conditions, it would not be defiled; and even were it permeated with good causes, nothing would make its nature pure. It is therefore asserted that it is neither defiled nor pure. The substance of true nature is perfect in itself — nothing can be added to it to make it increase, nor can it be decreased nor made to shrink. Furthermore, it cannot be increased by dispelling ignorance and revealing the true nature of things when cultivating *prajñā* (originally the real nature of things cannot be increased). Nor can it be decreased by obstructing it by ignorance and so rendered imperceptible, if one cannot cultivate *prajñā* (because the true nature of things cannot be reduced). It is, therefore, said that it is neither increasing nor decreasing. In other words, because the substance of real nature does not change — when materiality (*se*) emerges, one's body is not born, when materiality perishes, bodily death does not extinguish it. Because of emptiness all ordinary humans contaminate themselves with the defilements of unwholesome *dharma*s, but they do not become defiled by it. Although a sage is permeated by undefiled wholesome *dharma*s, he is not pure because of that. When all beings are confused about it, it is not decreased, and when all *buddha*s realise it, it is not increased. The true nature of existence is indeed miraculous. It has not changed from ancient time until today, having remained the same for countless aeons (*kalpa*s). Sentient beings and the *buddha*s form an integral whole, ordinary people do not differ from each other. What is called the appearance of phenomena is not born and the exhausting of causation is not perishing. Following the current without getting contaminated (not becoming defiled), leaving obstacles as not pure (impure), breaking confusions without removing anything, and perfecting virtues without increasing anything, this is the principle of being neither born nor perishing, being neither defiled nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing.

If the extremes are treated as equal by means of the genuine emptiness of true nature, then there will be no arising and no ceasing, defiled and pure spoken of as equal. Only because living beings are confused, residing in darkness, do they engage in delusory production of conceptualisations¹³³ and

¹³³ The term *jīdu* 計度 can denote different kinds of rational discrimination, it is commonly translated as 'conceptualisation'— e.g., *jīdu fēnbīe* 計度分別 'conceptualizing discrimination.' In Chinese Buddhist texts the term *jīdu* can also denote stubborn clinging to the views attained by discriminating conceptualisation of objective circumstances.

attachments, their liberation will thus include the discovery of the deceptive marks of appearance (*xu wang xiang* 虚妄相)¹³⁴ — one misperceives the accumulation of causes as birth, and perishing as their scattering (an ignorant being misperceives this birth and that death within transmigration through the six realms of rebirth as actual generation and cessation). The illusion of being contaminated by evil conditions is called defilement (*gou* 垢),¹³⁵ while the illusion of being permeated by good conditions is called purity. When one becomes awakened, mistaken discriminations (*wang ji* 忘計) are counted as increasing, when we are deluded, they are counted as decreasing. When we practise contemplation with *prajñā*, then we are able to see the truth, namely that *prajñā* is not born; and when we illuminate it through contemplation on provisional truth, we are able to see the principle of conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*), which reveals that it is not perishing. Consequently, we know that there is neither defilement nor purity, neither increasing nor decreasing. Since these principles are immensely profound, we shall try to explain them using the following analogies.

‘Neither born nor perishing’ is like saying that a light is born, when a lightbulb is connected to electricity, while we do not see how the electricity itself is born; on the other hand, when the bulb is unplugged from electricity and darkness ensues, we say that it has perished, while we have not seen electricity perish in the first place. Although the light and darkness are generated and cease to exist [respectively], electricity on the other hand has

¹³⁴ The Chinese term *xu wang xiang* 虚妄相 corresponds roughly to the Sanskrit term *mṛṣālakṣaṇa* or *mithyābhāṣa*. What is meant by the ‘deceptive marks’ are the false appearances that are thought to be inherent in objects, causing ordinary people to misperceive these objects as objectively existing, real, or being endowed with self. Cf. Buswell & Lopez (2014: 585).

¹³⁵ In Chinese Buddhist terminology, the character *gou* 垢 means ‘impurity’ or ‘[mental] defilement.’ As something that pollutes and defiles the mind it corresponds to the Sanskrit term *mala* ‘stain.’ Akin to Sanskrit, where the term *mala* can be used as a synonym for *kleśa* ‘afflictions,’ the Chinese term *gou* can also be used to mean ‘afflictions.’ However, since in the preceding paragraphs, Binzong uses the term *gou* in a pair with the term *jing* 淨 ‘pure,’ in this concrete case, the term *ku* should be interpreted as ‘defilement’ or ‘impurity.’ As such, it can also be found in the Chinese phrase *fannaou gou* 煩惱垢, a collective term for the ‘six impurities’ that are produced from the original *defilement*. This original defilement is the meaning of the term *gou* 垢 in the above text by Binzong.

no birth or perishing. ‘Neither defiled nor pure’ is akin to the sunlight shining on mud, which after all is not defiled because of this. Similarly, when the sun illuminates the clear water of a lake, its [clear water] does not represent the light itself.¹³⁶ Although there is a distinction between clear and muddy water, the sunlight is still only a single entity, which is fundamentally neither impure nor pure. ‘Neither increasing nor decreasing’ is like digging [a hole] into the earth to attain emptiness. The *Lankāvatāra-sūtra* says:

by digging a one-foot hole into the ground, we obtain one foot of emptiness; and by digging ten feet into the ground, we have ten feet of emptiness.

When we are digging, emptiness is born, and when we fill the hole with dirt again, the emptiness perishes. While there are the states of being empty or being full, emptiness alone is a substance which has no increase or decrease. The principle of being neither born nor perishing, neither defiled nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing is the genuine emptiness of true nature. Furthermore, all the five aggregates, the twelve sense bases, and the eighteen elements (cognitive realms) are *dharma*s created as illusions by ordinary living beings. The four noble truths, the twelve causes and conditions, and the obtainment of wisdom are *dharma*s cultivated by the sages who transcended worldly existence. ‘Arising and ceasing’ refer to ‘the aggregates, sense bases, sense organs, and realms’; ‘defiled and pure’ refer to ‘truth,’ ‘causes and conditions’; ‘increase and decrease’ refer to the ‘obtainment of wisdom.’ Because ordinary people are confused about the truth and pursue illusions, there exist birth and ceasing to be. The ‘gate of transmigration’ of the twelve causes and conditions belongs to the two [noble] truths of suffering and origination,¹³⁷ which represent the ‘defilement’ (*ku*) of residing

¹³⁶ What Binzong is trying to illustrate here is that the light which illuminates (i.e., enlightens) the water of the lake (i.e., our mind) is not of the same substance as the mind. In other words, the ‘clarity of the water’ is the innate property or potential of the ‘lake’ and not in any way a property of the ‘rays of light,’ which would be transported from the ‘sun’ and bestowed upon the water. In this way, the light of the awakening teaching is intended to illuminate the clarity within the mind itself. As such it is the means and not the end of awakening, which in the final instance needs to be transcended and cast aside as well.

¹³⁷ Here the term *erdi* 二諦, which is usually equated with the Sanskrit term *satyadvaya*, probably does not refer to the two main kinds of truth, namely the ultimate and the conventional truth. Instead, it probably refers to the four noble truths, which is why the term *erdi* needs to be translated as the ‘two noble truths’ and the preceding term *kuji* 苦

in the world of *karma*. The ‘gate of cessation’ on the other hand belongs to the two [noble] truths of cessation and the way, which constitute the ‘purity’ of transcending the world of *karma*. When a *bodhisattva* cultivates the path of direct realisation, this constitutes an increase, when the confusion is eliminated, this constitutes a decrease.

When we now speak about neither arising nor ceasing, neither defiled nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing, this means that the substance of the true nature of things essentially knows no [distinction between the] ordinary man and the sage, between practice and realisation, or cause and effect. It rather speaks about direct revelation of the *wisdom* of true emptiness — dropping off all views and all emotions.

II Synthetic explanation: Oh! Śāriputra! The five aggregates, as well as all other *dharmas*, although their appearances are provisional, have as their substance the genuine emptiness of the true nature of things. Thus, originally, they do not arise from the accumulation of causes and conditions, nor cease when all conditions cease. Nor is there such a thing as purity achieved by overcoming obstructions, nor defilements born from illusions. Finally, there is no increase at the moment of enlightenment nor decrease at the moment of confusion. Therefore, I say that this is the inherent emptiness of all *dharmas*: they are neither born nor cease to be. Here ends section D6 on revealing the nature of things.

集 as ‘suffering and accumulation’ or ‘suffering and origination.’ The ‘four noble truths’ (*si shengdi* 四聖諦, Sanskrit *catvāry āryasatyāni*) are generally understood to include: suffering, origination (accumulation), cessation, and the path (way).

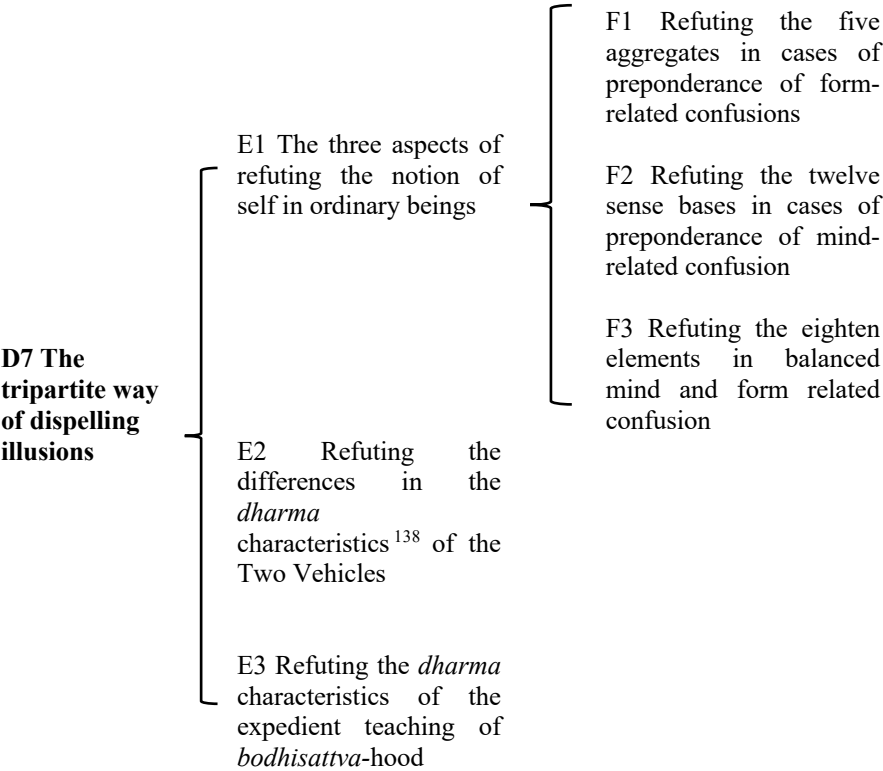


TABLE 8: TRIPARTITE WAY OF DISPELLING ILLUSIONS

¹³⁸ Here, the term *faxiang* 法相 or ‘*dharma* characteristics’ denotes the difference in the teachings of the two ‘Vehicles’ of Buddhism, namely the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna.

D7 The tripartite way of dispelling illusions

E1 The three aspects of refuting the notion of self in ordinary beings

F1 Refuting the five aggregates in cases of preponderance of mind-related confusions

The preceding discussion about the true nature of things explains the substance of the genuine emptiness of the true nature of things. The following sections on removing false notions, however, explain that original nature (*lixing* 理性)¹³⁹ originally contains no falsely perceived phenomena such as materiality and so on.¹⁴⁰

Shigu kong zhong wu se, wu shou, xiang, xing, shi.

是故空中無色，無受、想、行、識。

Therefore, the core of emptiness is formlessness, without sensing, perceiving, acting, or cognising

¹³⁹ *Lixing* 理性 refers to ‘original nature,’ one of the synonyms for ‘true *thusness*’ (*zhenru* 真如), the sameness of principle and nature. As a view it describes seeing the world of *thusness* by means of the nondiscriminating wisdom illuminating the emptiness of self and existence.

¹⁴⁰ In the teaching that Binzong is adhering to, all factors of existence are separated into three main categories (*sanke* 三科). These are: the five aggregates, the twelve sense bases, and the eighteen elements. In Buddhist teaching the three categories are said to have been established by the Buddha in order to resolve sentient beings’ attachment to an inherently existing self (*renwozhi* 人我執). To refute clinging to the single nature of the self, the Buddha taught the five aggregates that aggregate to form one’s nature, to refute clinging to the self as the experiencer of reality, he spoke about the twelve sense bases, and to dispel attachment to the self as creator or actor, he expounded the eighteen elements. According to the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, some deluded minds will always cling to the idea of the inherently existing self. To deal with such cases, this treatise presents a special teaching. In his explanations, Binzong follows both the approach and the terminology used in the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*.

This text on the refutation of characteristics (*poxiang* 破相) contains altogether three categories (*sanke* 三科),¹⁴¹ which are established to refute the two notions of self and the two Dharmas held by the members of the Two Vehicles and ordinary people, respectively. The first focus is on eliminating an ordinary person's notion of the five aggregates. The concept of self (*woxiang* 我相) clung to by ordinary people does not go beyond the duality of form (body) and mind (*se xing* 色心). A confusion of mind means clinging to reflections and thoughts. Clinging to the illusion of phantom conditions and causes regarded as the mind. The confusion of form (*se*) is clinging to form and physical objects. It is clinging to substance made of the four elements and regarding it as the real self. It is further clinging to various false appearances and regarding them as true *dharmas*. Since such clinging itself has no origin, one still cannot be willing to temporarily suspend it. Because the confusions are of different kinds, they consequently bring into existence the difference between the 'revealing and combining' (*kai-he* 開合) of *dharmas*.¹⁴² There is a difference between the states in which the mind-

¹⁴¹ On the meaning of *sanke* 三科 see the preceding footnote. Here, the term *sanke* 三科 is regarded as an expedient Dharma or teaching, established in order to refute clinging to the illusory notion of the self in the first place and in order to subsequently also get rid of the provisional teaching (Dharma).

¹⁴² Binzong uses the term *kai-he* 開合, which can have many different meanings. The elementary meaning of the term is 'opening up and closing' or 'opening and sealing.' Secondly, it can refer to 'opening up' a concept for analysis, 'combining' concepts for synthesis. In a similar sense, it can also denote 'revealing' the character of a particular concept and 'matching' what has been revealed with other known characteristics. In this translation I will partly follow Charles Muller's translation of the two terms in the *Outline of the Tiantai fourfold teachings* (*Tiantai sijiao yi* 天台四教儀), (<http://www.acmuller.net/kor-bud/sagyoui.html>) namely 'revealing' and 'combining,' by rendering the two terms as 'revealing' and 'assembling.' In a minority of cases, where 'assembling' or 'to assemble' will not fit the context, I use other close synonyms to express the intended meaning, including 'combining.' Here, it needs to be further noted that, according to my view, when interpreting the aforementioned pair of characters in texts such as the present one, we should always keep in mind the elementary Chinese meaning, namely 'opening' and 'closing.' It is namely that the author as well as the Sinophone reader of this text will probably also consider the possible implications, connotations, and the semantic nature of these two terms in this very manner. That this may be so is evident already from Binzong's own explanation of the meaning of the

related confusions are stronger than the form-related, and those with form-related confusions stronger than the mind-related ones; sometimes mind-related confusions also match form-related confusions. The Buddha has a mind of mercy and compassion, and his wisdom is of mirror-like ability. The Buddha uses skilful and expedient means to teach humans. To those who are inclined more heavily to confusions of mind, he teaches the five aggregates — he uses one *dharma* to assemble form, namely the aggregate of materiality, and four *dharms* to reveal the mind, namely the four remaining aggregates. This is the Dharma of assembling form and revealing the mind. If a person is more strongly inclined to confusion of form and less so to confusion of mind, then the Buddha speaks about the twelve sense bases. In this case, one and a half *dharms* are used for the mind — one is the faculty of thought, while for conceptual objects (*dharmāyatana*) only a half is used. The *dharms* revealing the mind, on the other hand, are ten and a half in number — five sense organs, the five objects of feeling, and half of conceptual objects. This is called the *dharms* of assembling the mind and revealing form. To those who are equally confused regarding the mind and form, the

method or technique of *kai-he*. In one of the endnotes to this commentary, he writes as follows:

Revealing and assembling (*kaihe* 開合, opening and closing) — that is to say revealing as extending (opening up) and assembling as narrowing down (closing), in order to suit the agility or slowness of individual innate properties of sentient beings. As the present *sūtra* elucidates, if a sentient being has a confused mind, then one assembles (closes) form and reveals (opens) the mind, such as for example is the case with the five aggregates. If a sentient being is confused about form, then we reveal (open) materiality and assemble (close) the mind, such as, for example, the twelve sense bases. If, however, one is confused both about the mind and form, then both mind and form require revealing (opening), such as, for instance, the eighteen elements. If one is confused neither in relation to form nor mind, then mind and materiality need not be revealed. Because we want all beings to benefit according to their situation, therefore, with revealing (opening) or assembling (closing), with instructing broadly or narrowly, we enable [the teaching] to suit their respective situations. Which is also causing the practitioner to give rise to the mind of wisdom.

As we can see in the above excerpt, the use of the terms ‘opening (up)’ and ‘closing (down)’ would be more pragmatically suitable, while the conceptual implications behind these two terms are probably better expressed through ‘revealing’ and ‘assembling.’ Muller’s choice of ‘combining,’ however, seems to be less suitable in this case.

Buddha taught the eighteen elements.¹⁴³ In this case, ten and a half *dharmas* are then used to reveal form, while, at the same time, the remaining seven and a half *dharmas* are used to assemble mind — six consciousnesses, the mind sense, and half of the mental objects. This is called the Dharma of concurrently revealing the mind and form.

I Analytic explanation: The four characters *shigu kong zhong* 是故空中 ought to be treated in relation to the proposition that there is no wisdom and no attainment. The word *shigu* follows the previous sentence, indicating that in the aforementioned inherent emptiness of all *dharmas* there is no materiality, feeling, perception, volition, or consciousness, as mentioned in the second sentence; or even that there is no such thing as wisdom or attainment of [such *dharmas*]. *Kong zhong* means within the heart of genuine emptiness of the true nature of things. Finally, the character *wu* in ‘without materiality’ simply means empty. The emptiness of the aggregates has already been discussed. The preceding sentence, mentioning the *bodhisattva*’s seeing clearly that the five aggregates are all empty, enunciates that the five aggregates are in themselves all fabricated. What we are now reading is that the original nature of genuine emptiness of true nature is that there originally exist no such kind of deceptive marks to speak of, which we have no need to repeat here.

This is said about cases of stronger inclinations towards the delusions of the mind and lesser tendencies to the delusions of materiality. Therefore, what seals the ‘eyes, ears, nose, taste, and touch’ is the aggregate of materiality, while what opens up ‘thought’ are the four aggregates of feeling, perception, volition and consciousness. This concludes the section F1 on refuting the five aggregates.

¹⁴³ The term *shibajie* 十八界 means ‘eighteen elements,’ which make up human cognition of the objective world. They are the six sense faculties (*liugen* 六根), the six objects of sensation (*liuchen* 六塵), and the resulting six consciousnesses (*liushi* 六識).

F2: Refuting the twelve sense bases in cases of preponderance of form-related confusion

Wu yan, er, bi, she, shen, yi; wu se, sheng, xiang, wei, chu, fa.

無眼、耳、鼻、舌、身、意；無色、聲、香、觸、法。

There are no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or consciousness; no seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, or *dharma* (phenomena).

These are the twelve sense bases (*shier ru* 十二入), the six sense organs are the six internal sense bases, and the six sense objects are the external sense bases, together these all form the twelve. *Ru* 入 means ‘to involve [by taking in]’ (*sheru* 涉入) and refers to the ability of the six senses to take in sense objects as well as the ability of the sense objects to enter sense organs. By mutually ‘involving’ each other, the sense organs and the sense objects give rise to consciousness, while in addition also being fathomed by consciousness. The twelve sense bases are also called *shier chu* 十二處 (the old translation uses the character *ru* 入 and the new translation the character *chu* 處. *Chu* means ‘bases’ on which something can rely; it means that consciousness arises, based on the six senses and six sense objects). In other words, the six sense organs and six sense objects serve as the bases for consciousnesses to arise. The six sense organs are what it relies on and the six sense objects are what is perceived.

I Analytic explanation: *Yan* 眼, *er* 耳, *bi* 鼻, *she* 舌, *shen* 身, *yi* 意 are the six sense organs (*liu gen* 六根) — sight, hearing, smell, taste, bodily sensation (touch), and mind. *Gen* 根 (roots) denotes the ability to give birth or arise (like grassroots can give birth to stems and leaves), which means that the ‘six roots,’ such as sight and so on, are able to give birth to the six consciousnesses, such as the visual and so on. When the sense of sight encounters the visible realm (*sejing* 色境) this gives birth to visual consciousness ... and when the sense of mind encounters the realm of

dharmas, this gives birth to mind consciousness (*manovijñāna*); this is why they are called roots.

Eyes have the function to perceive visual objects (*yuanse* 緣色), the root of this function is thus as an organ specialised in looking. Ears have the function to perceive sounds; the root is thus as an organ specialised in listening. The nose has the function to perceive smells, which makes the root as an organ specialised in smelling. The tongue has the function to perceive flavour, which makes the root as an organ specialised in tasting. The body has the function to perceive touch, while at the same time it also constitutes the integral mechanism on which the sense organs (roots) like sight rely; its root is thus as an organ specialised in movement. The mind has the function of perception, which makes its root as an organ specialised in cognising and thinking. The former five sense organs are composed of the four elements and thus belong to materiality, while the last sense organ is an organ based on the mind and thus belonging to mentality. But while the Lesser Vehicle treats thought consciousness as [simply] the mind-sense (*yigen* 意根), the Greater Vehicle identifies it with the seventh of the eight consciousnesses, namely mind consciousness (*monashi* 末那識).

If we were to call these six senses by physiological terms, then these would be: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, and the brain. Speaking from the perspective of their use, these would be: the faculty of sight (the eye sense), the faculty of hearing (the ears), the faculty of smell (the nose), the faculty of taste (the root of the tongue), the faculty of touch (the body), as well as the psychological faculty (the mind).

The aforementioned six faculties distinguish between the physical sense organs (*fuchengen* 扶塵根) and the senses of subtle matter (*jingsegen* 淨色

根).¹⁴⁴ Physical organs or ephemeral sense organs (*fuchengen* 浮塵根)¹⁴⁵ are those that we have from birth. They are about external appearances, coarse in substance and impure, they have only form and substance, they are completely without awareness: the eyes are in the shape of grapes, the ears in the shape of freshly rolled leaves, the nose like a suspended pair of paws, the tongue like an early crescent moon, and the body is shaped like a *tabla* drum, with the mind like seeing in a dark room. Because the function of the sense organs is to contribute to sensory ability, in Chinese they are called *fuchen* 扶塵, namely ‘assisting-dust.’ Furthermore, since the six sense organs are trifling, unreal *dharmas*, also called ephemeral, they are harmful and corruptive. While the ephemeral sense organs are what is relied on, in the centre there are further the senses of subtle matter, which are those that are

¹⁴⁴ The term *jingse* 淨色 corresponds to the Sanskrit term *rūpaprāsāda*, which can be translated as ‘subtle matter.’ On the meaning of this relatively complex concept, the reader can consider Vasubandhu’s exposition on the *bodhisattva*’s perceiving of and practice in the different *buddha*-fields:

The *bodhisattva*, in possession of super-knowledge [of supernormal accomplishments], moves through the *buddha*-fields (*buddhakṣetra*) but, in these various fields the languages are not the same, and the *bodhisattva*, not understanding the little sentient beings located far off, seeks the super-knowledge of the divine ear (*divyaśrotra*). Remembering always the great articulated sounds (*śabda*), prompted by many and numerous audiences, he grasps their characteristics and cultivates the practice of them. As a result of this continuous practice, his ear (*śrotra*) contracts a subtle matter (*rūpaprāsāda*) derived from the four great elements of the form world and, possessing this matter, he succeeds in hearing at a distance. Without any difficulty, the *bodhisattva* penetrates divine (*divya*) and human (*mānuṣa*) articulated sounds (*śabda*), whether coarse (*audārika*) or subtle (*sūkṣma*), distant or close.

This translation was adopted after Vasubandhu as translated by Gelong Londrö Sangpo (2012: 2362). Considering the above excerpt from the treatise of Vasubandhu, the term ‘subtle matter’ accounts for the universal substance, the material tissue, which underlies all *buddha*-fields and by means of immersing into which the *bodhisattva* can be said to possess something akin to a universal knowledge. ‘Hearing at a distance’ is thus just another way of saying that he is able to access the universal substance that underlies ‘sound’ in all its permutations at different levels of existence.

¹⁴⁵ The Chinese term *fuchen gen* 浮塵根 is used to denote ‘ephemeral sense organs’ (generally referred to in Sanskrit as *indriya*). It also appears in the form *fuchen gen* 扶塵根, meaning physical or external sense organs. The word *fuchen* 扶塵 denotes fleeting and vacuous. The actual sensory abilities are called *indriya*, *zhenggen* 正根 ‘correct senses’ or *shengyi gen* 勝義根.

in fact reliable, and thus called the ultimate faculties (*shengyigen* 勝義根).¹⁴⁶ These faculties, which constitute the actual sensory ability of humans — and thus the real substance of the six ephemeral sense organs — possess the capability to arouse consciousness and perceive the objects of the external realm, which is also how they are superior (*sheng* 勝, ‘transmundane’) to the ephemeral and thus called the [senses] of ultimate existence (*shengyi* 勝義). Also, because they are composed purely of the four elements, they are called [senses] of ‘subtle matter.’ These senses are hidden within, their substance is delicate and pure, and akin to glass, they cannot be seen by the naked eye but only by ‘divine-eyes’ (*tianyan* 天眼, ‘heavenly eyes’). Their function seems to resemble nerve cells in human physiology. If we used purely material physiological terminology for these six kinds of senses then these would be called: the optic nerves, auditory nerves, olfactory nerves, gustatory nerves, nerves involved in touching, and the sympathetic nerves (this is merely an analogy though and cannot be regarded as accurate).

As pointed out above, the physical sense organs of sight are the eyeballs, while the pure senses of sight are the optic nerves. If one were only to sense light using the pure senses — the visual nerves, without using the ephemeral ones — the material eyeballs, then one would quite surely resemble a blind person. Or, if one were only to sense light using the ephemeral sense organs, then the pure sense organs would also serve no real function. One thus needs to be equipped with both kinds of senses, so that our eyes would be of any use at all. The same goes for all the other sense organs.

Materiality, sound, smell, taste, touch, and *dharmas* are the six objects of cognition (dusts, *chen* 塵). We can distinguish between objects of cognition in the sense of pollution (*ranwu* 染污, Sanskrit *kliṣṭa*) and unsteadiness (*dongyao* 動搖, ‘shaking’):

- (1) Because these six kinds of objects pollute our original mind, we call them the ‘six dusts’ (six data-fields).

¹⁴⁶ The distinction between ephemeral and ultimate or transmundane senses is a distinction established in the Consciousness Only school of Buddhism (*Yogācāra*).

(2) Because they are in the state of constant fluctuation between arising and ceasing, we interpret them as ‘unsteady.’

The six sense objects (dusts) are also called *liujing* 六境, because materiality and the other five *dharmas* are all objects — *jing* 境 — of the six sense organs like sight and so on. The former five dusts are all objects of our physiology, and thus pertain to the *dharmas* of materiality. The latter, that is the *dharmas*, are a mental (psychological) object, which makes them belong to the *dharmas* of the mind. Because there are six kinds of realms (*jingjie* 境界) perceived by these six sense organs, we also call them the ‘six realms.’

The ‘realm of form’ (*sejing* 色境, also ‘form-object’)¹⁴⁷ comprises all objects seen by the eyes — such as the colours green, yellow, red, and white, or length and shape, and even male and female physique. The ‘realm of sound’ (*shengjing* 聲境) are all objects heard by our ears — such as those sounds made by stringed instruments, wind instruments, the sounds of jade pendants, singing, and even male and female voices. The ‘realm of smell’ (*xiangjing* 香境) are all objects that can be smelled by our nose — the smell of ambergris and musk, the smell of sandalwood, the scent of agarwood, all kinds of cosmetic smells or even the smells associated with the social status of men and women. The ‘realm of taste’ (*weijing* 味境) are all the objects tasted by our tongues — sweet, salty, sour, bitter and spicy, down to all different flavours of food. The ‘realm of the palpable’ (*chujing* 觸境) are all

¹⁴⁷ The terms *sejing* 色境, *shengjing* 聲境, *xiangjing* 香境 etc. could also be translated as ‘objects’ of the individual senses. When it comes to their relationship with Sanskrit terminology, the term *shengjing* 聲境, for example, can be interpreted as corresponding to either *śabdaviṣaya* or *śabda*, that is ‘sound-object’ or simply ‘sound.’ On the other hand, Binzong emphasizes the Chinese etymological connection between *liujing* 六境, which is generally translated as ‘six objects,’ and *jingjie* 境界, which denotes the spheres or realms (*jie* 界) of such objects (*jing* 境), there exists a dilemma between following Binzong’s Chinese etymologically-motivated usage and more general Buddhist terminology founded on Sanskrit. If we follow Binzong’s line of reasoning, then the terms like *shengjing* or *sejing* ought to be rendered into English as ‘realm of sound’ and ‘realm of form.’ But if, on the other hand, we were to interpret their Sanskrit correspondents, then we would have to translate them as ‘objects of sound’ and ‘objects of sight,’ or simply ‘sound’ and ‘form,’ respectively.

objects that can be sensed by our bodies through direct contact with things — cold and warm, smooth and rough, light and heavy, soft and hard (as experienced by the touch of our clothes on our skin), and even bodily contact between women and men. The ‘*dharma* realm’ (*fajing* 法境), are all objects perceived in the mind, such as the shadows projected by the five aggregates and the mirages of all past events.

The six realms of cognition possess within them the two aspects of, being ‘pleasant’ (*keyi* 可意) or ‘unpleasant’ (*bukeyi* 不可意). There also exists the distinction between the ‘innate’ (*jusheng* 俱生), the ‘combined’ (*hehe* 和合), and the ‘transformed’ (*bianyi* 變異).¹⁴⁸ Hence there exist, for example, so-called pleasant and unpleasant forms, pleasant and unpleasant sounds, all down to pleasant and unpleasant *dharma*s. Thus, for example, seeing an ugly object makes one dislike it. This is called an unpleasant form. When we hear convivial sounds and think of them as agreeable, this is called a pleasant sound. When, however, we hear sounds of distress, we might become disturbed, which is called an unpleasant sound. The examples for smells, flavours, touch, and *dharma*s are similarly perceived. As for the three ways in which the sense objects arise, namely the innate, the combined, and the transformed, this can be explained as follows: the scents of sandalwood and agarwood, whose fragrances arise from within them are therefore called innate scents. Scents that are created by humans by combining the scents of different things, such as the scent of cologne, are called combined scents. Scents created by changing certain things, as for example, by applying heat,

¹⁴⁸ *Jusheng* 俱生 means ‘inborn’ or ‘inherent’ as opposed to something that comes from the outside or is acquired. In the above context, however, one could also understand the term to mean the same as Sanskrit *samutpatti*, namely ‘what is born/arises together.’ In this sense, the term *jusheng* would seem to refer to the manner in which objects of cognition arise in the world. Similarly, the term *hehe* 和合 denotes their combinations or material phenomena, in which different elements or objects coalesce (Sanskrit *saṅgati*) to form single entities. Finally, the term *bianyi* 變異 denotes their changes and transformations (related to Sanskrit *vikṛti*, *vikāra* etc.) of their cognizable characteristics. All three modes refer to the objects of sensation in this world, which individually originally pertain to different phenomenological ‘realms’ of sense objects, related to the six sense faculties, and in turn also the six consciousnesses established on the basis of what is sensed by the latter.

are called transformed scents. Another example is the sweetness of sugarcane or the bitterness of the yellow lotus; they are such by their own nature, which is why they are called innate flavours. Those flavours, however, that are created by a combination of many different flavours, such as those used in cooking, are called combined flavours. Lastly, the flavours obtained through gradual transformation, such as the sweet taste of a ripe gourd, or a bitter taste of aged ginger, are all called transformed flavours.

The first five objects of cognition (materiality, sound, smell, taste, and touch) are easily understandable. Only the last object of cognition, i.e., *dharmas*, is problematic to comprehend. For this reason, we shall give a more precise explanation. For example, if we have heard yesterday, or a few months before, something that we were fond of, such as sweet-sounding words, then although the event took place in the past, it is retained within our minds (in the mind-sense), so that we can frequently imagine the vestiges of these past events (mirages). These mirages are called *dharma* objects or *dharma* dust.

It needs to be known that each of these twelve bases can be called *dharmas*. If this is the case, however, how is it that the sixth alone is called *dharma* object (*dharma* base or *dharma* dust)? Each of the former five objects delimits or is limited by something, whereas the objects of the mind include all different *dharmas* and are thus unlimited. The six sense objects are also called ‘the six thieves’ (*liuzei* 六賊), because they have for their medium the six sense organs, which can often be robbed of all meritorious *dharmas*. The *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* reads as follows:

A *bodhisattva mahāsattva* treats these six dusts (data-fields) as six great thieves. Why is that so? Because they can rob one of all good *dharmas*.

There are two ways of interpreting the character *wu* 無 in the expression *wu yan*, *er* 無眼, 耳:

(1) *Wu* refers to the lack of self-nature of the six sense organs, which, if they are separated from provisional combinations of causes and conditions have no self-nature of their own, so that materiality and the other six objects of sensation cannot be established at all.

(2) *Wu* further denotes the state when the six sense organs encounter the six dusts (data-fields), like form and so on, one gives rise to no false distinctions, having no illusory operations of the six senses and six dusts (eyes do not crave form, ears do not crave sounds...), this is what we speak of as ‘absence’ (*wu* 無).

Furthermore, the six sense organs and six sense objects are illusory phenomena, which take form within the genuinely empty true nature of things and, as such, they have no real substance. If we are aware that they are inherently empty illusions, we can return to our inherent nature. However, since these appearances have no substance and their nature is inherently empty, can we still speak about the six senses and six sense objects? The *sūtra* says that there are no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind, and there is no seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, or cognising *dharma*s. The *Great perfection of wisdom-sūtra* says:

The base of sight is only the mind, even the *dharma* base is only the mind; and all these bases are empty.

This is the meaning.

The above exposition treats cases of preponderance of form-related confusions over the confusions of the mind, which is why it speaks about the method of revealing the five sense-faculties of sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touch. Altogether, this method involves the first five senses together with mental objects (*fachen* 法塵), where materiality (*se*) is not represented, which is why this yields altogether ten and a half *dharma*s of form.¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, bringing together the sense of consciousness and half of the objective mental *dharma*s (*xinsuofa* 心所法) within mental objects yields altogether one and a half *dharma*s of mind. Here ends the section F2 on refuting the twelve sense bases.

¹⁴⁹ Yogācāra teaching distinguishes between *dharma*s of form and mental *dharma*s. Consequently, there can exist either material or mental confusions. *Dharma*s that are able to take up space, make physical obstructions and undergo decay and are called *dharma*s of form. In this way, all sense organs and their objects are considered as a part of this category of *dharma*s. When Binzong speaks about ‘preponderance’ (*zhong* 重) or ‘equality’ (*bing* 並) of mental and form-related confusions, he derives this from the Yogācāra categorization of *dharma*s and its corresponding method of treating the different kinds of possible forms of delusions in a practitioner.

F3: Refuting the 18 elements in balanced mind and form related confusion

Wu yan jie, naizhi wu yishi jie

無眼界，乃至無意識界。

Since there is no visual realm, there is even no realm of consciousness.

I . Preliminary explanation. Here the 18 elements (*shiba jie* 十八界) are discussed. Apart from the six sense organs and six sense objects, there are six consciousnesses that arise in cognitive processes, making up altogether eighteen sense spheres. The meaning of *jie* 界 is ‘boundary.’ The eighteen *dharmas* of the six sense organs, six sense objects and their corresponding consciousnesses each have clear boundaries and do not intermingle. The eye sense organ has the boundaries of the organ itself, as do other five sense organs [respectively]. Similarly, each of the six sense objects has its own boundaries. Likewise, the six types of consciousnesses each have their own boundaries. For example, the eye sense organ has visual object as its boundary, the ears have sound as their boundary... and the mind has *dharma* objects as boundary. Furthermore, it is only matter that is sensed by the eyes; there is no sight beyond matter. Sound can only be sensed by the ears since there is no hearing beyond sound, and only *dharmas* are cognised by mind-consciousness, there is no thinking beyond *dharmas*. The visual object has the eye sense organ as its boundary, sound has of the ear sense organ as its boundary, ... and *dharma* objects have the mind organ as boundary. Because visual matter is the only thing seen by the eyes, we are not able to see sound, smells, flavours and so on. Because our ears can only hear sounds, we cannot hear things like visual objects, flavours, and tangibles. The visual sense organ cannot give rise to any other kind of consciousness but visual consciousness. This was all explained from the perspective of ordinary people. This is what is meant by ‘while as one they are originally lucid, yet split into six

combinations.’¹⁵⁰ All other types of consciousness can also be explained in the same manner. To summarise, forms are objects (*jie* 界) perceived by our eyes, while the eyes are further the object (*jie* 界) into which the form is entering. When the sense of sight is conjoined with the sense object and visual consciousness, the visual sense sphere occurs. Ears, nose, tongue, body, and the mind can also be understood in the same way. In addition, material objects¹⁵¹ are external objects (or realm, *jie* 界) that reside without, while the sense of sight resides within, and as such is an internal object, and consciousness is formed between them, as an intermediary object. Because each of them has different boundaries, the sense spheres are also called the 18 [border] realms (*shiba jie* 十八界). The ‘boundaries’ (*jie*) are related to ‘function’ and ‘preservation.’ For example, the eyes have the ability to see, the visual objects can be seen, and visual consciousness has the ability to cognise the object. This is the meaning of boundaries as functions. The sense spheres can preserve their own specifics; for example, China has a territory of 11.6 million square miles [sic], but if China had no borders, then it would lose its specific identity. Similarly, if the boundaries of the 18 senses were lost, we would not be able to distinguish the six senses, the six sense objects, and the six types of consciousnesses.

II Analytic explanation: There is no visual sense sphere, and even no sphere of consciousness. The two characters *naizhi* 乃至 are a rhetorical instrument which helps to keep the text brief. Without listing the names of all eighteen elements but instead listing only the first sphere of sight and the last (mind consciousness) all the spheres can be briefly denoted by the word *naizhi* 乃至.

The eye sense organ is the sphere of the eyes which has its boundaries, and similarly all the other senses have their specific boundaries. Visual perception, which distinguishes between various visual objects has also

¹⁵⁰ These two verses are quoted from the sixth scroll of the *Shurangama sūtra with commentary* (*Da Fo dingshou lengyan jing qianshi* 大佛頂首楞嚴經淺釋).

¹⁵¹ *Sejing* 色境, Sanskrit *rūpaviṣaya*, are the objects of the faculty of sight, such as colour and shape.

boundaries. The six types of consciousness that arise along with the corresponding types of sense objects and sense organs are called the 18 elements, with each of them having specific boundaries.

Dependent on the eyes and visual objects, seeing-consciousness arises, having for its function differentiation. Similarly, dependent on the ears and auditory objects, hearing-consciousness arises, having for its function differentiation. Dependent on the mind and *dharmas* objects, mind-consciousness arises, having for its function differentiation (mind-consciousness is the seventh consciousness). It is from self-clinging to phenomena (the eighth consciousness) that the mind consciousness arises, which is able to see the myriad *dharmas*; this is the reason why the six consciousnesses have the seventh consciousnesses as root. Mind-consciousness has *dharmas* as its objects and its function is discrimination. The first five consciousnesses are based in the physical senses, and the sixth consciousness is based in the mind.

Intuition is the capacity of the first five consciousnesses. Each of the five consciousnesses can only receive one type of object (for example, if the visual consciousness perceives flowers, it cannot perceive them as birds), and are thus completely without the mind's weighing up of discriminations,¹⁵² and only able to perceive the present but not the past or future. The capacity of the sixth consciousness is discursive thought,¹⁵³ that is, it has the ability to recollect the past and anticipate the future and, in sentient beings, is thus a medium for creation of *karma*.

If we regard the six consciousnesses in terms of physiology, vision is related to visual consciousness, hearing to auditory consciousness, smelling to olfactory consciousness, tasting to gustatory consciousness, touch to bodily consciousness, and perception (*zhijue* 知覺) to mind consciousness. The first

¹⁵² The original says *chouliang fenbie zhi xin* 籌量分別之心, where the verb *chouliang* 籌量 can be used to mean 'weighing,' 'counting' or evaluating (*tulayati*).

¹⁵³ Binzong uses the term *fenbie jidu* 分別計度. Written the other way around, the expression *jidu fenbie* 計度分別, corresponds to the Sanskrit term *abhinirūpaṇ āvikalpa*. As such it occurs predominantly in the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, where it represents one of the three kinds of discrimination (*san fenbie* 三分別).

five consciousnesses are merely moments of cognition without any secondary thoughts. The mind consciousness is related to perception (*zhijue* 知覺); it not only knows the object but also allows secondary thoughts.

Some of the 12 sense bases relate to materiality, while others to the mind. But it is only the sixth consciousness which is attributed to the *dharmas* of the mind. When the consciousnesses give rise to differentiation, they depend on the senses, while the function of senses depends on the consciousnesses. Finally, dust (material objects) is the object of the function and that which is perceived¹⁵⁴ by the root consciousness.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, the six sense objects are perceived by the six senses and known by the six consciousnesses. The six senses are capable of sensing the six sense objects respectively, they serve as the bases from which the six consciousnesses arise. The six consciousnesses are based on the six senses in order to carry out their function to differentiate the six types of sense objects. There exists a close relationship of mutual interdependence between the senses, sense objects and consciousnesses. If we were to lack one of the senses, we could not cognise in that particular sense sphere. The senses, objects, and consciousnesses must be in accordance to generate various kinds of functions. The senses and objects are mutually interlocked, and if there were no consciousness arising along with them, we would not be able to cognise in that particular sense sphere. This is what is meant by:

If the mind were not present, we would gaze without seeing, and listen without hearing, we would eat without knowing the flavour of the food.

The emptiness and the unreal nature of the six senses and six sense objects has already been explained above. Since the senses and their objects are all empty, the conscious mind which occurs along with them is empty of self. When it is realised that the internal senses and external objects are empty,

¹⁵⁴ Here the term *liaobie* 了別 means perception in the sense of cognizing and distinguishing between objects, as opposed to merely ‘receiving’ (*shou* 受) sense objects as in the case of sensory organs.

¹⁵⁵ In the textual tradition of the Consciousness Only school, the term *genshi* 根識 represents one of the 18 names of the so-called ‘storehouse-consciousness,’ namely the *ālayavijñāna*.

and the middle six consciousness are empty as well, the light of the mind can shine alone. Then the inner, external, and the middle are merged back into one single nature — the genuine emptiness of true nature. If this is the case, where are the illusory *dharma*s of the 18 elements (*jie* 界) actually located? Hence, it is said that ‘there is no visual realm, as there is even no realm of consciousness.’

The *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* reads as follows:

[For] the senses and the sense objects are detached [from each other], and the consciousnesses have nothing to depend on, [it is namely that] the senses and sense objects have no substance and therefore, the nature of consciousness is originally empty.

The *sūtra* further reads:

If even one person manages to discover the truth and returns to the original, the ten directions will become empty and completely disappear.

If the emptiness of the ten directions disappeared, then what about the aggregates, bases, locations, and realms? What we need to know is that this and other illusory ideas exist because of the absurd clinging and attachments generated by the minds of ordinary beings. If I am not confused and understand that the illusory nature of phenomena and that all appearances have the inherent nature of emptiness, then the substance of all *dharma*s will be seen in its genuine nature of true emptiness; will there still then be any fantastic attributes and appearances such as the five aggregates etc. left for me to speak of? As a result of such an awakening realisation, the five aggregates are transformed into the three virtues,¹⁵⁶ the 12 bases turn into the

¹⁵⁶ The three virtues (*sande* 三德) or three qualities (*zhi* 質), Sanskrit *guṇa*s are: purity (*chunzhi* 純質), turbidity (*jizhi* 激質), and obscurity (*yizhi* 翳質). In reference to the Buddha’s virtues, the *sande* 三德 are translated as ‘merits,’ namely: the merit of the Buddha’s compassion, the merit of severing affliction, and the merit of wisdom. Finally, the term *sande* 三德 can also denote the three forms of perfection pursued by followers of the Buddha. These are, the perfection of the Buddha’s *karmic* works (*yinyuan de* 因圓德), the perfection of the fruits of his characters and wisdom (*guoyuan de* 果圓德), and the perfection of grace in saving other sentient beings (*enyuande* 恩圓德). Considering that the *sūtra* under discussion is devoted to a *bodhisattva*’s attainment of perfect wisdom,

two attributes (*xiang* 相, the attribute of [pure] wisdom (*zhixiang* 智相) and the attribute of [expedient] function (*yongxiang* 用相)). That is, the six senses become the attribute of wisdom, the six sense objects turn into the attribute of function, and the eight consciousnesses into the four kinds of purified cognition.¹⁵⁷ Huineng 惠能, the Sixth Patriarch of Chan, once remarked that:

The origin of consciousness is wisdom and thus requires no further change. One only needs to apprehend that the purified self-nature of the eight consciousnesses are in their substance nothing else but perfect mirror-like cognition (*dayuanjing zhi* 大圓鏡智).

If we understand this principle, then the aggregates, bases, locations, and sense spheres become subtle, while all senses and all forms of sensory objects become the all-permeating light of enlightenment which shines within self-nature. It is in this moment that the darkness of confusion of sentient beings, all clinging born out of illusion, is bound to be broken and disappears.

We can conclude that the illusory *dharma*s of the aggregates, bases, locations, and sense spheres are all nothing but a form of dependently arisen provisional phenomena (*xiang* 相), which obscure the truth and create illusory

it is reasonable to conclude that, in the above context, the term denotes the last three virtues related to the threefold perfection.

¹⁵⁷ Generally speaking, the four kinds of purified cognition or awareness (*sizhi* 四智, Sanskrit *catvāri jñānāni*) include: the so-called ‘mirror cognition’ (*ādarśajñāna*, *da yuanjing zhi* 大圓鏡智), ‘cognition of equality in nature’ (*samatājñāna*, *pingdeng xing zhi* 平等性智), ‘wondrous observing cognition’ (*miao guancha zhi* 妙觀察智), and ‘cognition of unrestricted activity’ (*cheng suozuo zhi* 成所作智). In Yogācāra, these four types of cognition correspond to untainted cognition (*wulou* 無漏), while the same school of Buddhism further recognizes eight forms of tainted (*youlou* 有漏) consciousness. Aside from the above-listed four types of cognition, in the *Prajñāpāramitā* textual corpus, the term *sizhi* 四智 is used to denote cognition of: *dharma* (*fazhi* 法智), species (*leizhi* 類智), other minds (*taxin zhi* 他心智), and the secular world (*shisu zhi* 世俗智). Binzong follows Huineng’s use of the term, which corresponds with the Yogācāra classification of the ‘four untainted forms of cognition.’ In both cases, the term *zhi* 智 is used to denote ‘knowledge’ or ‘knowing’ rather than wisdom, which in this commentary is associated entirely with the term *prajñā*.

manifestations. As such, their substance is completely empty. However, while ordinary people are obsessed with regarding all these manifestations as the true *dharma*, it is only the *bodhisattva* who contemplates it applying profound and subtle wisdom (*prajñā*), they understand that within the all-pervading substance of the genuine emptiness of the true nature of things, there are originally no illusory *dharmas*. The aggregates, bases, locations, and sense spheres are illusory *dharmas* which confuse our senses and are the root of all suffering, being impermanent, and self-less, which is why we must make supreme efforts to eliminate them. On the other hand, the genuinely empty true nature of things, which is the ultimate principle of truth, is eternal, pleasurable, and tranquil, and therefore has to be thoroughly and completely realised. When it is said that:

If we are to drop all *dharmas* as illusory, but treating them as if they were not empty, then where are we to seek for the true emptiness of the true nature of things?

This question illustrates the sense of convenient means. If one is contemplating the comprehensive view about the fundamental emptiness of nature of all *dharmas*, then the entire substance within illusory phenomena is real. Then, if meditating on anxiety and distress, on life and death, one will approach *nirvāṇa*. Having recognised that, one will realise that not even the slightest part of *dharmas* can be destroyed and not even the slightest part of them can be [created]. Without attainment and realisation, one would then approach the true nature of things, namely that all *dharmas* are genuinely empty. This is the true meaning.

The above exposition was about combined delusions of the mind and form. Hence what was explained were: the five realms of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body (from among the six senses), the five realms of colour/form, sound, smell, taste, and touch (from among the six objects), as well as the one-half realm of imperceptible form, belonging to the [domain of] mental objects [not depending on sense perception]. In all, ten realms and a half, all in the [category] of material *dharmas*. Concurrently, this approach has also strived to reveal the six realms of the six consciousnesses, such as visual consciousness ... and thought consciousness, as well as that half of the realm of those material objects that pertain to mental factors, which together with consciousness make up for seven and a half border realms. These all pertain

to the *dharmas* of mind. In total, together they make up the 18 elements, which constitute the *dharmas*-gate of the three categories (*sanke* 三科), every single one of which corresponds to the innate characteristics of sentient beings, for which corresponding techniques of cultivation are prescribed, so that they are able to become aware of the real essence of things.¹⁵⁸ This is called one awakening for all awakenings.

III Synthetic explanation: The ‘inherent emptiness of all *dharmas*’ denotes the nonexistence of the five aggregates within the all-pervading substance of the emptiness of true nature, which is originally empty and pure. Neither are there the six senses, the six sense objects or the six consciousnesses. Therefore, the *sūtra* says that there are no boundaries in the sense realms. Part F3 on the refuting the 18 elements is thus completed (this is also the conclusion of part E1 on refuting ordinary people’s notions of self).

¹⁵⁸ As in a few other places, the opening lines of this section and this entire paragraph, speak about the technique of ‘opening up and closing down,’ where the treatment of the aggregates, sensory organs, and objects of sensation in cultivation is adapted to the needs of the person practicing. The logic behind this method which carefully calibrates focus (opening up) and lesser regard (closing down) within the practice of meditation, in this case follows the Tiantai classification of *dharmas* (and consequently also forms of delusion) into those related to form (*sefa* 色法) and those related to the mind (*xinfa* 心法). Consequently, a person can be either more strongly deluded in regard to form or to the body, while Buddhism also allows for a ‘middle way,’ where both types of delusions are equally represented. This is basically also reflected in the structure of the part on refuting the three types of confusions. See further Binzong’s endnotes below, where the method of *kai-he* is explained in more detail.

E2 Refuting the different Dharma characteristics of the Two Vehicles

F4: Refuting the Dharma of the 12 *nidāna* of a *pratyekabuddha*

F5: Refuting the Dharma of the four noble truths of *śrāvaka*

F4 Refuting the Dharma of the 12 *nidāna* of a *pratyekabuddha*

Wu wuming, yi wu wuming jin; naizhi wu lao-si, yi wu lao-si jin.

無無明，亦無無明盡；乃至無老死，亦無老死盡。

**Since there is no ignorance, there is also no ending of ignorance.
There is even no old age and no death, there is also no ending of old age and death.**

I Preliminary explanation: This passage speaks about the emptiness of the 12 *nidāna*. What is the meaning of the word *nidāna* (*yinyuan* 因緣)? *Yin* 因 is immediate cause (*qinyin* 親因), that is seeds that can give birth to something. *Yuan* 緣 is the contributing condition/cause (*zhuyuan* 助緣), such as rain and dew, or human manual work, which assist in generating things. We can also say that *yin* 因 is the origin of things, while that which assists their becoming is called *yuan* 緣. Altogether, there are 12 *nidāna* or links in the chain of dependant origination:¹⁵⁹ (1) ignorance (*wuming* 無明), (2)

¹⁵⁹ The expression ‘12 *nidāna*,’ or Chinese *shier yinyuan* 十二因緣, is another term for the ‘twelffold chain of dependent origination,’ Sanskrit *pratītyasamutpāda*. The term *nidāna* can have a range of different meanings, from ‘cause’ or ‘motivation’ to ‘occasion’ or ‘episode.’ The Chinese translation *yinyuan* 因緣 is semantically motivated after the first pair of related meanings, denoting ‘cause.’ In parallel to the term *yinyuan*, the Chinese Buddhist vocabulary also possess a translation for the more specialized (having a narrower scope of possible meanings) term *pratītyasamutpāda*, namely *yuanqi* 緣起. While the term *yinyuan* refers primarily to the individual causes within the twelffold links of causation, the term *yuanqi* denotes the principle or the causal interconnectedness which underlies the entire chain. According to *The Princeton dictionary of Buddhism*, the sequence of causation involving 12 interconnected links (*nidāna*) consists of: (1) ignorance, (2) predispositions, or volitional actions, (3) consciousness, (4) name (*ming*)

volitional actions (*xing* 行), (3) consciousness (*shi* 識), (4) name and form (*ming-se* 名色), (5) the six internal sense-bases (*liuru* 六入), (6) contact (*chu* 觸), (7) feeling (*shou* 受), (8) attachment (*ai* 愛), (9) clinging (*qu* 取), (10) becoming (*you* 有), (11) birth (*sheng* 生), and (12) old age and death (*lao-si* 老死). All these components constitute dependant origination for all sentient beings, experienced in the three realms and kinds of rebirth¹⁶⁰ within *samsara*.

Although the followers of the Two Vehicles do understand and become free from clinging to the self, they still preserve clinging to Dharma, because they are not yet able to thoroughly realise the perfect principle of the true nature of things and thus cannot get free from all *dharma*s. The twelve *nidāna* are thus the Dharma understood by *pratyekabuddhas*. The Sanskrit word *pratyekabuddha* (*pizhi jialuo* 辟支迦羅) is written in Chinese as *pizhi fo* 辟支佛. The word *pratyeka* (*pizhi* 辟支) is translated as causes and conditions, the word *buddha* (*fo* 佛) as the awakened one. The two words combined could be translated as ‘awakened to causes and conditions,’ which can be abbreviated as *yuanjue* 緣覺, also written as *dujue* 獨覺 (awakened by one’s own means). It is usually explained that when the Buddha lived in the world, those who became awakened by hearing him expound on the 12 causes and conditions (*nidāna*) were called *pratyekabuddhas*. In fact, one does not necessarily have to be born in the time of a *buddha* to be called *pratyekabuddha*. Since the Buddha’s teachings on the *nidāna* has been transmitted, those followers who were not born in the time of the Buddha can also receive instruction on *nidāna*. One can also read Buddhist *sūtras* on one’s own and obtain an insight into the doctrine of *nidāna*; such a person can be called a *pratyekabuddha*. Otherwise, all beings born before and after the Buddha would never be able to be called *pratyekabuddhas*. Even if one

and form (*se*), or mentality (*xin*) and materiality (*se*), (5) the six internal sense-bases, (6) sensory contact, (7) sensation, or feeling, (8) thirst or attachment, (9) grasping or clinging, (10) existence or a process of becoming, (11) birth or rebirth, and (12) old age and death. (Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 669).

¹⁶⁰ The expression *liudao* 六道 denotes the ‘six destinies’ or ‘six kinds of rebirth’ in *samsara*. These include incarnations in hell, as a hungry ghost, an animal, an *asura*, a human, or a god.

were not born in the Buddha's time or born in a place where Buddhism is not known, or has not yet learned the teaching of the Buddha, or has been well trained in wisdom, or has good karma from the past, such a person would be capable of becoming aware of the way of Dharma. This is what is meant by:

Observing the yellow leaves fall in autumn, admiring the hundred flowers blooming in spring; watching things change and realising their impermanence, then one day such a person may transform and enter the true way.

By observing the causes and conditions of the arising and ceasing of phenomena, one can become awakened and liberate oneself on one's own and can thus be called a *pratyekabuddha*. Although one does not know about the Buddha and his teachings. Those who have entered the path to liberation in the time when the Buddha was not in the world, can become awakened on their own (*pratyekabuddhas*). Even those who lived in the time of Buddha but had no opportunity to listen to his teaching, were still able to independently enter the path of enlightenment by investigating causes and conditions and the nature of things, and could be still regarded as *pratyekabuddhas*. It seems that, in reality, this goes against the principle of cognition of equality in nature in the teaching of the Buddha, which is a doctrine (*zongzhi* 宗指) without authority and a narrow-minded idea. At the same time, it is also unable to convey the principle, which has been present in Buddhism for a very long time, namely that everyone has the possibility to self-awaken. To recapitulate, those who contemplate the Dharma of the 12 *nidānas*, realise the fruits of sagehood through understanding the law of the nonbirth of things; they are called in the Lesser Vehicle 'the independently awakened ones' or *pratyekabuddhas*.

II Analytic explanation:

Since there is no ignorance, there is also no ending of ignorance.

Since there is no old age and death, there is also no ending of old age and death.

This text ought to be discussed in the following way: 'since there is no ignorance' and 'there is no old age and death' ought to be regarded as one sentence, and 'there is no ending of ignorance' and 'there is no ending of old age and death' as another. The character *wu* 無 is used in the meaning of empty (nonexistent); it means that ignorance is empty, old age and death are

empty as well. The character *jin* 盡 means ‘to be extinguished.’ *Naizhi* 乃至 stands as an abbreviation for the expression ‘and so on’; it is used as a form of abbreviation when only the first and the last of the 12 *nidāna* are listed, namely ‘ignorance’ and ‘old age and death’ respectively, while the remaining ten in-between are omitted. The 12 *nidāna* are also called the links of dependent origination (*shier yuanqi* 十二緣起), the ‘12 strongholds’ (*shier zhongcheng* 十二重城),¹⁶¹ the 12 thistles and thorns (*shier jingji* 十二荊棘), and the 12 links (*shier lianhuan* 十二連環). The 12 causes and conditions are presented in two ways, namely as the gate of transmigration (*liuzhuan men* 流轉門) and the gate of the cessation of rebirth (*huanmie men* 還滅門).¹⁶² The gate of rebirth represents the conditions and causes for the cycle of births and deaths, which occurs due to ignorance which is in turn the cause and result of karmic suffering. The gate of transmigration explains how the different ways of being (*xiangzhuang* 相狀) within cyclical existence (*lunhui shengsi* 輪迴生死) are all the result of the deludedness of worldlings,¹⁶³ they

¹⁶¹ An alternative rendering of the expression *shier yinyuan* 十二因緣, to distinguish the above-listed synonyms from one another, the literal Chinese meaning has been given, otherwise all the above listed expressions could be translated directly as, for example, the ‘12 links of dependent arising’ etc. Naturally, the same goes for the Chinese expression the ‘12 thistles and thorns.’

¹⁶² The so-called ‘gate of cessation’, *huanmie men* 還滅門, is another name for the so-called ‘gate of enlightenment.’ It denotes, as it were, ‘entering’ the process of escaping suffering and deluded entrapment within the process of transmigration, a cyclical existence referred to by the expression *liuzhuan men* 流轉門. Meaning literally ‘reverting to’ or ‘returning to extinction,’ the Chinese equivalent seems to imply a relatively common idea in traditional Chinese thought, namely that moral perfection and all forms of enlightenment are attempts at restoring an original pure self. Confucius, for example, speaks about humaneness (*ren* 仁), a pivotal category in Confucian thought, as ‘overcoming one’s self and returning to propriety’ (*ke ji fu li* 克己復禮). Here, it needs to be pointed out that, in Confucian thought, ethical categories are tantamount to ‘cosmological categories.’

¹⁶³ The above translation is a simplified version of the phrase *you mi er cheng fan* 由迷而成凡. A more comprehensive translation of this expression would be ‘becoming a deluded worldling due to one’s ignorance or delusions.’ Since the characters *mi* 迷 and *fan* 凡 are both derived from the same semantic category, that is ‘delusion,’ to avoid needless repetition, the entire expression has been abbreviated to ‘deludedness of worldlings.’ In considering this translation, the reader should note that the term *fan* 凡 can be used in the role of either an adjective or a noun, meaning either ‘deluded’ or a ‘regular person,’

are both the causes and the results of *karmic* suffering. The gate of cessation, on the other hand, refers to liberation from the cycle of birth and death, the process of becoming a liberated being through insight into causes; such an awakening is accompanied by joy.

What exactly is meant by the gate of transmigration (*liuzhuan* 流轉)? Here is an analogy. the unending cycle of life and death is like a ceaseless ‘stream’ (*liu* 流) of water or the ‘revolving’ (*zhuan* 轉) of a wheel, which is why rebirth is called *liuzhuan* 流轉. This is the law of birth and death of all ordinary people, traversing the six realms. What is meant by the gate of cessation (*huanmie* 還滅)? The term *mie* 滅 refers to eliminating the mental afflictions of the cycle of life and death, and *huan* 還 refers to the return to true nature, which is *nirvāṇa*. Therefore *huanmie* 還滅 means the law of liberation of the sages of the Three Vehicles.

Ignorance causes habitual actions, which in turn cause consciousness, and so on, down to becoming which causes old age, birth-and-death. This is the gate of rebirth. The 12 *nidāna* bring about defilements (*ran* 染, *kliṣṭa*, also ‘tormented, afflicted’). But, if ignorance does not arise, then habitual actions do not arise, and then consciousness does not arise, and so on, down to the cessation of becoming, birth, old age and death. This is the gate of cessation, when the 12 *nidāna* cease, and thus defilements are eliminated. Before we proceed to discuss the gate of transmigration, we must first give a brief explanation of the term 12 *nidāna* (*ershi yinyuan* 二十因緣).

Ignorance (*wuming* 無明, *avidyā*) is not understanding (its substance is delusion and its characteristic is confusion), a generic term for all mental afflictions or defilements (*kleśa*). From the very first mind moment, which makes us act indiscriminately, the awareness of intrinsic enlightenment is obstructed. Ignorance arises in such moments when there is no understanding

‘worldling’ as opposed to a sage. Especially in formations like the one mentioned above, the word *fan* 凡 is used as a noun, namely as a shortened form of the commonly encountered term *fanfu* 凡夫 (Sanskrit *bāla*, *prthagjana*), a ‘worldling’ or an ‘ignorant, unenlightened person.’

of the empty nature of things and consequently one's delusions give rise to a variety of attachments. In essence, ignorance is the foundation of a confused mind. But what exactly is confusion? It is a lack of understanding of the two kinds of emptiness, namely, the emptiness of the self-notion and the emptiness of *dharma*s. Ignorance is the foundation of attachment to the notion of self; because sentient beings do not understand that the five aggregates are illusory and unreal, and consequently cling to the idea of self in relation to the four elements, their own minds and perceptions of the six sense objects. The ignorance of clinging to *dharma*s means deluded clinging to myriad phenomena, viewing them as real *dharma*s because of not understanding that all *dharma*s are dependently arisen and without self-nature. In other words, this is viewing one's body and its faculties as the self, and the material world (*bhājanaloka*) as *dharma*s. This is why the misunderstanding of the truth about the emptiness of self and *dharma*s is called ignorance.

[Commentary: We distinguish between fundamental ignorance (*genben wuming* 根本無名, *mūlāvidyā*) and secondary ignorance (*zhimo wuming* 枝末無名).¹⁶⁴ Fundamental ignorance refers to not understanding (or being deluded about) the emptiness of the essential nature (*lixing* 理性) of things (regarding all *dharma*s as having a real existence), and is thus called the ignorance of underlying principles (*mili wuming* 迷理無明).¹⁶⁵ Secondary ignorance is not understanding the provisional nature of the appearances of things due to delusion in regard to the myriad *dharma*s which are believed to be really existing. It is called ignorance in regard to concrete events (*mishi wuming* 迷事無明).¹⁶⁶ Ignorance of underlying principles refers to the state

¹⁶⁴ Aside from 'fundamental and secondary ignorance,' these ideas can also be described as 'fundamental and secondary nonenlightenment' (*genben bujue* 根本不覺 and *zhimo bujue* 枝末不覺). The latter version of the Chinese terms appears especially in the text of the *Awakening of faith* (*Qixin lun* 起信論).

¹⁶⁵ While *mili* 迷理 means 'deluded in regard to principles' of the fundamental principle of emptiness, the entire expression *mili wuming* 迷理無明 can be translated as 'ignorance of underlying principles.'

¹⁶⁶ In contrast to *mili* 迷理 'delusion in regard to principles,' the term *mishi* 迷事 refers to being 'deluded in regard to concrete events' or phenomena. While Bizong uses the longer

in which ignorance in all thoughts obstructs the underlying principles of the true nature of the middle path, causing one to be unable to discover it. The ignorance regarding concrete events refers to the state when the afflictions of seeing and thinking obstruct concrete events pertaining to the [cycle] life and death, causing one to be unable to exit it. Ordinary people do not understand absolute truth (*paramārthasatya*) and form attachment to distorted views [on the nature of things]. This is called the ignorance of wrong views and thoughts. When the members of the [other] Two Vehicles fail to understand the principles of conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*) and instead form attachments to the idea of emptiness, this is called the ignorance of senses and sense objects. When *bodhisattvas* do not understand the principles of the ultimate truth of the middle path, and instead form attachments to the idea of duality, this is called the ignorance of foundations. In short, delusions related to the truth are called primary ignorance, while delusions related to the appearances are called secondary ignorance.]

Xing 行 (**habitual actions**) means karmic formations (*zaozuo* 造作), it refers to all [habitual] actions, created by good and bad *karma* (*zao* 造), founded on ignorance.

Shi 識 means ‘**consciousness**,’ this is the eighth consciousness (it is the chief factor of karmic retribution in one’s lifetime). Consciousness arises due to *karma*, it is driven by the karmic force of the past, it is created from good and bad seeds. For rebirth to take place, first there has to be the parents who have karmic affinity, and when they copulate, there is darkness everywhere,¹⁶⁷ so that the only thing one can see is their sexual act, which

expression, *mishi wuming* 迷事無明, the same term can also appear in various different forms, including: *mishi huo* 迷事惑 or the abbreviated expression *shi wuzhi* 事無知, where the latter is closer to ‘nescience of the [nature] of the concrete events,’ rather than ‘ignorance’ in the sense of Sanskrit *avidyā*, Chinese *wuming* 無明.

¹⁶⁷ Binzong’s account of copulation and gestation is probably taken up after the *Garbhāvākṛānti-sūtra*, which represents the first Buddhist *sūtra* on the mechanism of ‘rebirth’ which had been translated into Chinese. The *Garbhāvākṛānti-sūtra* offers a week-by-week description of gestation, the incarnation of the soul, and the development of the body and mind. In the *sūtra*, the fourth week after the fertilization of the *ovum* is called *ghana*. Since, the formation of body and the consciousness of the embryo is

takes place in a space illuminated (by sexual light). The soul-consciousness,¹⁶⁸ being of acute senses, then approaches the bodies of mother and father in a split-second. At that time, suffering already from delusions, the soul then is suddenly caught by desire (a male loves the mother and detests the father, and the female loves the father and detests the mother).¹⁶⁹ The stream of desire acts as the seed, and when the consciousness is taken in, the foetus is formed. The mind flowing caught by desire is the seed which is being born, which when mixed with the father's sperm and the mother's blood becomes the embryo, so that ultimately the soul is entrapped within the foul-smelling womb prison.¹⁷⁰ How cruel. That the root of all the trouble of our life and death is set into motion in this way and all forms of suffering experienced by living beings follows on from this.¹⁷¹ This is the

described in detail below, in this paragraph the word must be exclusively about conception. Therefore, in this context the expression *sizhou* 四週 was probably intended to signify *sizhou* 四周 'everywhere' (on all four sides) rather than 'four weeks.' The entire sentence would thus read 'there is darkness everywhere' (*sizhou heian* 四周黑暗).

¹⁶⁸ Binzong speaks about *shenshi* 神識, which literally means 'spirit-consciousness' or the 'divine consciousness.' In Chinese Buddhist scripture, the term *shenshi* 神識, which originally denoted some kind of a 'sentient consciousness,' can also occur in the form *linghun* 靈魂, meaning the 'soul.' The *Garbhāvākṛānti-sūtra* on the other hand calls the reborn being *antarābhava*, or 'intermediate being' (between two incarnations). On the Buddhist theories of conception and gestation see Kritzer (2009).

¹⁶⁹ Strikingly, this kind of 'Oedipal' idea is a typical feature of explanations found in Buddhist treatises or *sūtras*. As a matter of fact, that a child would develop hatred towards one parent and love toward the other is regarded as an appropriate feature of its *karmic* development. Moreover, an inappropriate *karmic* constellation between the parents and the child would result in the absence of such Oedipal lust and hatred (see Kritzer 2009: 80). This very idea can also be found in the *Garbhāvākṛānti-sūtra*.

¹⁷⁰ Although such a depiction of conception might appear somewhat strange and bizarre to a general reader, in the tradition of Buddhist 'medical' treatises, such 'impure' imagery of conception is rather common, if not prevalent. Such is clearly the account given in the *Garbhāvākṛānti-sūtra*. For an in-depth discussion on this subject see Kritzer (2009).

¹⁷¹ As already hinted in the previous notes, the Buddhist interpretations of the mechanism of conception seems to contain a profoundly psychological aspect, regarding the time when the *antarābhava* first enters the womb as not only led by *karma*, but already endowed with all kinds of suffering and worldly attachments. Such, for example, is the idea that the 'soul' must form a craving desire for either one of the parents. This is, of course, continued also later at different levels of gestation, when the fetus starts experiencing cravings such as 'hunger and thirst' etc.

very first moment within the cycle of rebirth. (The [Mohe] *Zhiguan* ([摩訶止觀]¹⁷² says, when one is first conceived, this is called *kalala* (*geluoluo* 哥羅邏). At that time, one possesses three things: life, warmth, and consciousness. Of these, the wind of retribution constitutes life; the semen and blood not smelling foul and not being decayed constitute warmth; and movement constitutes consciousness. When, following the breath of the mother, these rise and descend, leave and enter, we call it the placing of consciousness (*shiwei* 識位)).

Ming-se 名色 (**name and form**)¹⁷³: *ming* (name) refers to the mind-consciousness (that is, when the soul-consciousness is first conceived within the foetus) and *se* (form) refers to the physical body (that is, when the father's semen and mother's blood mix to form a lump of flesh). *Ming* refers to the consciousness' entering into the mother's body with the taint of desire (*airan* 愛染, *trṣṇā*) and remaining entrapped there, while the seizing of the consciousness into the foetus formed out of the two drops of father's and mother's red and white liquids¹⁷⁴ is called *se*. The early formation of a foetus from matter and consciousness in a womb is called 'mentality and materiality' (that is the initial incarnation of consciousness in a womb). Because at the time of the initial conception the six sense organs have not yet formed, the mind consciousness cannot manifest its differentiating function. Therefore, it is not called the mind, but only 'name' (*ming*). At the time of first conception, the physical body is not yet complete, the five faculties are not yet formed, which is why we do not yet call it 'body,' but merely refer to it as 'form' (*se*). This is the stage of initial conception of the foetus within a womb, when the six sense organs have not yet been completely formed. The growth of human life within a foetus takes place in five stages: the first seven

¹⁷² The *Mohe zhiguan* is a treatise written based on the teachings of the Tiantai patriarch Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597).

¹⁷³ 'Name and form' is just one version of how this *nidāna* appears written in different Buddhist treatises. The other version is closer in meaning to the English terms 'mentality and materiality.' Although such translation would fit more closely the above context, I use the translation 'name and form' to retain the original Chinese meaning.

¹⁷⁴ The expression *chi-bai er di* 赤白二滴 'two drops of red and white,' refers to female egg and male sperm uniting at conception.

days are called the first foetal stage or *kalala*, which translates as congealment or mixing of filth — when the father's and mother's semen and blood are first combined, they form an impure coagulated lump of tissue. The second seven days are called the *arbuda* stage, which translates as a blister. Having undergone two weeks of gradual growth, it acquires the shape of a scar. The third period of seven days is called the stage of *peśī*, which translates as soft tissue. Over three weeks, it gradually turns into soft tissue. The fourth period of seven days is called the stage of *ghana*, which translates as solid flesh. In four weeks, solid flesh gradually forms. The fifth period of seven days is called the stage of *praśākhā*, which translates as limbs and joints; it is also called the stage of shape. From conception until the fifth period of seven days all sense organs are shaped, and the four limbs start distinguishing from each other. These are the stages of mentality and materiality.¹⁷⁵ From this point onward there are five stages: (1) infancy, (2) childhood, (3) youth, (4) middle age, and (5) old age.

Liuru 六入 are the 'six internal sense bases.' During the months spent in the mother's womb, the six sense organs gradually grow, and after birth, assume their function to perceive the six sense objects. They are therefore called the six entrances. After the formative stage of the fifth period of seven days, the foetus gradually develops the senses, and in the sixth period of seven days the hair, nails, and teeth are formed. The seventh period of seven days is called the stage of possessing sense faculties. There are altogether 37 seven-day-periods which all belong to the foetal stage, in which the body develops and is then used for the entire life.

Chu 觸 is 'sensory contact.' When the senses and sense objects meet, contact ensues. This is contact between any of the six senses and the corresponding external objects. The contact takes place after birth. When a child is two or three years old, it is innocent and simple, and when their senses come into contact with external objects, this only gives rise to pure perception, without any difference between liking and disliking. This is the function of contact between the six sense organs and the corresponding external objects.

¹⁷⁵ This description follows the week-by-week account given in the *Garbhāvākṛānti-sūtra*.

Shou 受 is ‘**feeling**’ (to feel the objects of contact). When senses and their objects interact in connection with the two types of phenomena — agreeable and disagreeable, this leads to the arising of the two types of feeling: suffering and pleasure. This is what we call ‘feeling.’ When the child is between four or five to ten years old, they begin to know and cognise the six sense spheres and becomes capable of distinguishing between good and shameful states, however, clinging does not yet arise. This is how feelings arise through contact with the objects of the external world.

Ai 愛 is ‘**thirst/attachment**’: in encountering external objects, craving can arise. Between the age of 11 or 12 to 18 or 19 years old mature desires start to emerge and the mind forms attachments to the objects of desire (these are the five sense objects discussed previously), however, one cannot pursue them much as yet. The scriptures only mention the word *ai* 愛 (*tṛṣṇā*).¹⁷⁶ Craving is not only about desires but also includes craving to get rid of things because of dislike (*zeng* 憎). When encountering favourable circumstances, one desires to keep them, but when adverse circumstances are encountered, the mind arises with aversion. Craving is thus a form of greed-afflicted mind, which arises from encountering external objects.

Qu 取 denotes ‘**clinging**’ (*wangqu* 妄取), it is grasping with much craving (*zhuiqu* 追取). At the age of 20, one’s cravings become more abundant, so that one starts clinging broadly to numerous sense objects. Although the texts only mention the character *qu* 取 (clinging or grasping), clinging also includes the notion of aversion (*she* 捨). When encountering pleasant phenomena, craving, followed by clinging, arises in the mind, which triggers

¹⁷⁶ Although, even in Buddhist writings, the character *ai* 愛 (‘love’ > ‘desire’) can have a variety of different yet still mutually related meanings, in this part of the text it refers to *tṛṣṇā*, which can be translated as ‘thirst’ or ‘attachment.’ It is in the first meaning that the character *ai* 愛 or the expression *tṛṣṇā* appear in the descriptions of the later stages of gestation in the *Garbhāvākṛānti-sūtra*. On the other hand, a direct translation between Chinese and Sanskrit would equate *ai* 愛 with *kāma*. However, in Chinese Buddhist terminology, the term *kāma* is usually translated as *yu* 欲. See further Buswell & Lopez (2014: 926).

a lot of effort to gain and keep the object of clinging. But when encountering unpleasant phenomena, aversion to it arises in the mind, and one endeavours to get rid of the unpleasant object by all means. In both cases there is clinging, an urge triggered by desire and craving, based on past ignorance and karmic formations, this creates the conditions for the future arising of craving.

You 有 (‘**being/becoming**’) are karmic deeds (*ye* 業). If there is a cause, there is a result. Because of previous causes (i.e., past desires and cravings) later on results arise (i.e., birth, old age, and death). Because of the pull of karmic forces, the causes and effects do not cease to exist. In consequence, rebirth in the three realms follows. In other words, from the urges of craving and clinging, *karma*, a range of defilements are formed which affect the karmic results of births and deaths in the future. Although the scope of results of *karma* (*guobao* 果報, *vipāka*) is broad, it essentially does not go beyond ‘circumstantial and direct’¹⁷⁷ forms of retribution. The ‘circumstantial result’ (*yibao* 依報)¹⁷⁸ is existence defined by desire (within the realm of desire),¹⁷⁹ it is material existence (within the material realm), or immaterial existence (within the immaterial realm). The ‘direct result’ (*zhengbao* 正報) on the

¹⁷⁷ ‘Circumstantial and direct retributions’ are written either as *yizheng* 依正 or *yizheng erbao* 依正二報. They can also be termed as ‘ancillary and primary.’

¹⁷⁸ In this particular case, the Chinese terminology does not distinguish between ‘result’ (hypothetically *guo* 果) and ‘retribution’ (*bao* 報). In the entire paragraph, Binzong speaks about *yibao* 依報 and *zhengbao* 正報, which translate primarily as ‘retributions.’ In the above translation, both terms have been amended to fit the supposed meanings the terms were probably meant to denote. Nevertheless, it needs to be stressed that the notion of *bao* 報 or ‘retribution’ is a seminal Chinese term, which already at the earliest stage of the introduction of Buddhism to China, became inextricably linked with the notion of *karma* — in particular, with the negative results of evil (moral) actions in past lives. In this sense a correct, noninterpretative, translation of the above terms would certainly have to be ‘circumstantial retribution’ and ‘direct retribution.’

¹⁷⁹ Binzong lists both synonyms for the Sanskrit term *kāma bhava*. While the term listed as primary is *yuyou* 欲有, which corresponds more closely to its Sanskrit correspondent, as an explanatory synonym Binzong also lists the term *yujie* 欲界 (*kāmadhātu*), which to a Chinese reader emphasizes that what is meant is a ‘realm’ (*jie* 界) of desire. The same approach was used also for the *seyou* 色有 and *wuseyou* 無色有 — Sanskrit *rūpabhava* and *ārūpyabhava* — which describe material and immaterial existence within material and immaterial realms — Sanskrit *rūpadhātu* and *ārūpyabhava*.

other hand, is the inherent existence (in the current life), or intermediate existence — in the time between death and rebirth, when this body is already dead, but the next body is not yet created, which is still under transformation and therefore called the intermediate hidden body (*zhongyinshen* 中陰身)¹⁸⁰ — or the later-being¹⁸¹ (i.e., in the future life). These three kinds of existence are conditional results. The ‘inherent’ (*ben*) and other two forms of existence are the direct result of being reborn in a new body. Previous ‘habitual actions’ refer to past *karma*, the present ‘karmic deeds’ (*you*) refers to current *karma*; although it constitutes the present, it also produces causes for future birth and death. This is how karmic results take place.

Sheng 生 denotes ‘being reborn’ (*shousheng* 受生). *Karma*, which is generated in the present is the cause for future results, reflected in rebirth, the four kinds of birth¹⁸² in the six destinies.¹⁸³ The single link (*zhi* 支, ‘branch’) of ‘rebirth’ connects causes and conditions; if, however, we speak of the links of attachment, grasping, and becoming, then it belongs to the results in forthcoming births; while if we speak of the later link [*nidāna*] of old age and death, then it belongs to the causes of future fruits stimulated by

¹⁸⁰ This is the direct translation from Chinese; the corresponding Sanskrit term is probably *antarābhava* or ‘intermediate being.’

¹⁸¹ In Buddhist usage, the term *houyou* 後有 (literally, that which exists later), denotes rebirth, the person in their next incarnation (compare with Sanskrit *aparo bhavaḥ*). Another meaning of the same term would be final existence, immediately before cessation attained within *nirvāṇa*, that is, for example, the last incarnation as a *bodhisattva* etc.

¹⁸² The ‘four kinds of birth’ (*sisheng* 四生) are the four ways beings are born into the three realms and six destinies:

- (1) born from eggs (*luansheng* 卵生, Sanskrit *aṇḍajayoni*);
- (2) born from a womb (*taisheng* 胎生, *jarāyujāyoni*);
- (3) Born from moisture (*shisheng* 濕生, *samsvedajāyoni*) — insects and small life forms whose eggs are difficult to detect were believed to be ‘born from moisture’ — this type is also called *yiinyuansheng* 因緣生, i.e., ‘born from causes and conditions’; and
- (4) born through spontaneous transformation (*huasheng* 化生, *upapādukāyoni*) — for instance, higher forms of beings, born out of the *karma* attained in their previous lives.

¹⁸³ Traditionally, the ‘six destinies’ are said to include incarnations in: hell, as a hungry ghost, an animal, an *asura*, a human, and a god.

specific actions.¹⁸⁴ This is thus an activity for which one will experience *karmic* retributions in future.

Lao-si 老死 denotes ‘**old age and death.**’ When all the senses weaken, this is called *lao* 老 (old age), and when one’s body and life force are completely spent, we speak of *si* 死 (death). Since there is life, there must also be death. The illusory body composed of the four elements must naturally undergo a process of transition from youth to old age, an endless process of transformation, which is bound to end in death. This process is akin to the gradual perishing of a burning incense stick. Wanting to live forever without ever dying, to be strong forever without growing old, is absolutely impossible. Old age and death are basically two different things, why are they regarded as one term? It is because one may not necessarily reach old age and instead die early, like a prematurely deceased child. Old age and death are thus results of the past karmic formations.

In sum, ignorance (*wuming* 無明) is a form of delusion, which is beginningless; it obstructs the true mind in every single mind moment. Habitual actions (*xing* 行) are all karmic formations created on the basis of ignorance in the past. Consciousness (*shi* 識) refers to the eighth storehouse (*ālaya*) consciousness, which is received in this life because of past *karma* (i.e., it is the subject of karmic results). Mind and body (mentality and materiality) are a state of gradual bodily and mental development of consciousness (*shenshi* 神識), relying on the parents’ semen and blood (the word is about the more or less initial stage of perception). The six sense-bases (*liuru* 六入) designate the initial formation of the six sense organs within the mother’s womb. Contact (*chu* 觸) takes place, between the six senses and the six sense objects, however, as yet it does not give rise to aversion and desire in a newborn. Feeling (*shou* 受) is distinguishing between pain and pleasure when facing external objects (a function

¹⁸⁴ The above translation is a paraphrase of the originally simpler sentence: *shu weilai ganguo zhi yin* 屬未來感果之因. The term *ganguo* 感果 could be translated as the ‘stimulated effects’ or ‘stimulate fruits,’ while the character *yin* 因, evidently, denotes ‘cause.’ In its entirety, the expression can be translated as ‘the causes that stimulate future effects.’

developed after the age of five or six). Thirst/attachment (*ai* 愛) is a form of desire arising in relation to external sense objects (a function developed after the age of fourteen or fifteen). Clinging (*qu* 取) is pursuing the five desires¹⁸⁵ to a great extent (a function given rise to after the age of twelve). Existence or becoming (*you* 有) means a chain of habitual, ever renewed responses created by craving and clinging (*tan'ai* 貪愛, *rāga*, results of past *karma*). Being reborn (*sheng* 生) is the result of past karmic forces (i.e., a result based on *karma*). Old age and death (*lao-si* 老死) appear when one's senses wither and the body dies because of impermanence. We could also say that: 'ignorance' is the chief of all mental afflictions; 'habitual actions' are the entrepreneur of the cycle of life and death; 'consciousness' is responsible for life and death; 'the body and mind' and the 'six sense-bases' are karmic results and conditions for future cycles of life and death; 'contact, feeling, craving, and clinging' are the perpetrators of life and death; 'becoming' is the commitment to ignorant life and death; 'rebirth, old age, and death' are the painful outcomes of life and death. This is an explanation of the twelve *nidāna*.

Now we shall discuss the meaning of the term *liuzhuan* 流轉 meaning 'rebirth': caused by ignorance, due to one's deluded actions, seeking pleasure and personal gain, one forms erroneous attachments in various ways and consequently gives rise to various irrational 'habitual actions.' The karmic formations — habitual actions (*xing* 行) — that arise from ignorance are thus called volition (*wuming yuanxing* 無明緣行; here, *yuan* 緣 means to arise and to lead to). The *Abhidharmasamuccaya*¹⁸⁶ (short *Zajilun* 雜集論) says:

¹⁸⁵ The Chinese Buddhist term *wuyu* 五欲 denotes the 'five desires,' which arise from attachment to objects of sensation. According to the five objects they arise from, the teaching distinguishes between desires of, form (*seyu* 色欲), sound (*shengyu* 聲欲), fragrance (*xiangyu* 香欲), flavour (*weiyu* 味欲), and touch (*chuyu* 觸欲).

¹⁸⁶ Binzong quotes from Xuanzang's translation of the text, which is comprised of seven scrolls altogether. The text quoted can be found in the *Taishō Tripiṭaka* (Chinese Canon), Vol. 31, text no. 1605. Xuanzang's original title of the translation reads *Dacheng Apidamo jilun* 大乘阿毘達磨集論, which in Sanskrit would read Mahāyāna Adhidharmasamuccaya.

Ignorance encompasses two kinds of activities:¹⁸⁷ firstly, it calls forth ignorance (*yuchi* 愚癡) in sentient beings with regard to phenomenal existences; and secondly, it conditions volition.

Once we have past causes for creating *karma* — habitual actions — these induce consciousness which experiences results. Because of past karmic formations, consciousness arises again and again. The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* says:

Volition encompasses two kinds of activities: firstly, it brings forth the various dissimilar destinies of sentient beings in specific realms; secondly, it conditions consciousness.

Once consciousness arises in a foetus, it naturally contributes to the formation of the physical body. The body and the mind arise because of consciousness, as said in the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*:

Consciousness encompasses two kinds of activities: firstly, it supports the entanglement of all actions of the sentient beings; secondly, it conditions mind and matter.¹⁸⁸

Once the body and mind are formed, the six sense organs gradually develop and the six sense spheres are thus created. The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* says:

Name and form encompasses two kinds of actions: firstly, it governs the personality¹⁸⁹ of sentient beings; secondly, it conditions the six sense-bases.

¹⁸⁷ Sentences of the form *wuming you er zhongye* 無明有二種業 is a form well-established in Chinese Buddhist vocabulary. Here, we interpret the fixed part of the phrasal formula saying *you er zhongye* 有二種業 as meaning ‘encompasses/possesses two kinds of activities.’ The term *er zhongye* 二種業 equals the Sanskrit term *dve karmaṇī*, which denotes two kinds of activities — usually bodily and verbal acts. In this regard and other regards, the above translations from the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* are revised and adapted versions of the recent translation by Tan (2022: 55-6).

¹⁸⁸ *Ming-se* 名色, because in the above text the duality *ming-se* is used in two different contexts and meanings, here we translate them accordingly as ‘name and form.’ Tan (2022) follows exclusively the context of the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* as a consistent text, translating the term as ‘mind-matter.’

¹⁸⁹ This is Tan’s translation; however, the translation might require a more elaborate approach. The Chinese Buddhist term here is *ziti* 自體, which is usually glossed as the ‘self’ or ‘intrinsic substance’ of the illusory notion of self. The usual Sanskrit correspondent is the term *ātmanbhāva*. When it comes to the notion of *ātman* or ‘self’ in Buddhist vocabulary, *The Princeton dictionary* provides a very elucidating explanation:

Once we have the sense-bases, we are naturally able to contact external objects. The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* says:

The six bases encompass two kinds of actions: firstly, they sustain the full completeness of the individuality of sentient beings; secondly, they are the condition for contact.

Due to contact between the senses and sense objects, pleasant or unpleasant feelings arise, depending on the circumstances. Feelings of pleasure and pain arise because of contact. The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* says:

Contact encompasses two kinds of actions: firstly, it causes sentient beings to engaging continuity corresponding to the sphere of sensations-experiencing; secondly, it conditions feeling.

Feelings of pleasure and pain give rise to craving for desirable objects or aversion to unpleasant ones. These are the two modes of craving, namely desire or aversion, based on the feeling that arises from contact. The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* says:

Feeling encompasses two kinds of actions: firstly, it leads sentient beings to continuity (of transmigration) by producing the resultants through their experiencing of sensations; secondly, it conditions craving.

Because of strong craving, clinging to illusory objects of pleasure or pain ensues. Clinging is the result of a strong, prolonged craving. The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* says:

The factor of craving encompasses two kinds of actions: firstly, it draws sentient beings toward the systemic cycle of birth; secondly, it conditions clinging.

Since there is deluded grasping, there is naturally also the all-encompassing act of producing, which is under control of the power of karma.¹⁹⁰ This is the

In Sanskrit, ‘self’ or ‘I’, with a similar range of meanings as the terms possess in English, but used especially to refer to a perduring substratum of being that is the agent of actions, the possessor of mind and body [*ming-se*], and that passes from lifetime to lifetime (Buswell & Lopez 2014: 78).

In light of both its original meaning in Sanskrit as well as its acquired semiotic implications in Chinese, the optimal translation of the term *ziti* 自體 might be ‘self-substrate’ as the possessor of ‘name and form/mind and body.’

¹⁹⁰ *Yeli* 業力 translates literally as ‘the power of karma,’ which produces positive and negative retributions in rebirths.

law of how feeling causes states of karmic existence.¹⁹¹ The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* says:

Clinging encompasses two kinds of actions: firstly, it draws forth the consciousness of grasping in sentient beings, for grasping subsequent existence; it conditions becoming.

Due to karmic causes in the present, we must suffer results in the future, namely, rebirth in the six realms. Because of prolonged clinging, ‘becoming’ ensues, which means rebirth and future lives-and-deaths. The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* says:

Becoming encompasses two kinds of actions: firstly, it yields the presence of the subsequent existence of those sentient beings; secondly, it conditions birth.

Once there is birth, old age and death will follow naturally, along with all kinds of unavoidable worries and vexations. The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* says:

The factor of birth encompasses two kinds of actions: firstly, it generates appearances in the correct order of name and form, the six bases, contact and feeling of sentient beings; secondly, it conditions aging and death.

As for ‘aging and death’ the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* also offers an explanation:

The factor of aging-death encompasses two kinds of actions: it brings on the decline in age and lifespan with the passage of time.¹⁹²

In summary, the formula of dependant origination teaches that whenever the former occurs, the latter arises following it. It is, therefore, said that:

Ignorance causes volition and so in, till old age and death.

¹⁹¹ The term ‘karmic existence’ — Chinese *yeyou* 業有, Sanskrit, *karma-bhava* — denotes one of the seven states of existence (*liuyou* 七有). Alternatively, the term *yeyou* can also refer to the two *nidāna*, *xing* 行 (*saṃskāra*) and *you* 有 (*bhava*).

¹⁹² The above translations were adopted from Tan (2022: 55-6).

In essence, these twelve links (*shierzhi* 十二支) do not go beyond the three paths¹⁹³ of misery, productive karma, and suffering, up to the law of causality. Allow me first to explain causality.

Past causes based on ignorance and habitual actions are karmic causes which lead to results, namely present consciousness, body and mind, and other *nidāna*. Consciousness, mentality and materiality, the six sense spheres, contact, and feeling are the present effects of past karmic formations, which in turn are based on past ignorance and volition. This is how the past and present are causally linked. Craving, clinging, and becoming are the present causes, which generate suffering, old age and death. The *karma* generated in the course of my entire life will be generated by craving and clinging and will result in aging and death. Old age and death and future lives are the future effects of present craving, clinging and becoming. These are the links of causality between the present and the future.

Past ignorance and habitual actions (i.e., two causes), incur the experience of the effect which include consciousness, mind and body, the six sense spheres, contact, and feeling in the present. In turn, present craving, clinging and becoming are the three causes, which incur two results, namely old age and death, and rebirth. Such are the past causes and present effects, and the present causes and future effects. It thus transpires that based on causes further effects are experienced, while based on these effects new causes are created. Causes and effects are not concealed. When the past and the future follow each other without interruption, this is called the cycle of rebirth that revolves in endless motion.

There is a verse in Buddhist scriptures that says: ignorance, craving, and clinging are the three ‘mental afflictions’ (mental afflictions arise along with delusions), while karmic formations and becoming are the acts of karma.

¹⁹³ In this particular case, the term *sandao* 三道 refers to the ‘three paths of transmigration’: the path of misery and illusions (*fannaodao* 煩惱道), the path of productive karma (*yedao* 業道), and the resultant path of suffering (*kudao* 苦道). In this sense, the present use of the term *sandao* ought to be distinguished from the ‘three holy paths,’ which is also translated as *sandao* 三道.

From consciousness to feeling, together with birth-and-death, the seven forms of acts (*qishi* 七事)¹⁹⁴ together constitute the path of ‘suffering.’ This is to say, ignorance, craving and clinging are mental afflictions (ignorance is the past delusion from which karma arises; craving is the present delusion, which creates the karma). Volition and becoming are related to karma: volition is past karma, and becoming is present karma. Consciousness, the body and mind, the six sense-bases, contact, feeling, rebirth, old age and death are the path of suffering. Delusion, karma, and suffering are the foundation of rebirths for all sentient beings. The delusion, karma and volition of past lifetimes incur the experience of the five sufferings, namely the sufferings related to consciousness, mind and matter, the six sense-bases, contact, and feeling of the present lifetime. In turn, due to these five in the present life, new delusions, *karma* and becoming arise. Based on ignorance and karmic formations in the present life suffering is experienced again in future lives, including rebirth, old age and death. Suffering in future lifetimes further conditions the arising of new *karma* in the future. The present ignorance and karmic formations, founded in present suffering are thus related to past ignorance and karmic formation, embedded in suffering. Since the present suffering conditions ignorance and karmic formations, the suffering will also condition future ignorance and karmic formations. The past is beginningless and the future is endless. Karma is thus created by ignorance and creates suffering. Based on suffering, new ignorance arises, which in turn gives rise to new karma, and again, new ignorance and karma. Consequently, ignorance, karma, and suffering are like an endless spiral, an endless cycle of rebirth. Thus is the gate of transmigration (*liuzhuan men* 流轉門).

All sentient beings are without a beginning, they circle on the trajectory of ignorance, karmic formations and suffering, and are unable to leave the circle of rebirth. When a *pratyekabuddha* realises this entanglement in rebirths and suffering, dread is born in their mind, they become disenchanted and seek

¹⁹⁴ Here the expression ‘seven acts’ refers to carrying out, the phenomena of the seven *nidāna*, from consciousness to feeling (five links: consciousness, name and form, six sense-bases, sensory contact, and feeling), together with birth (one link) and old age and death (one link).

the *prajñā* of emptiness to eliminate ignorance and karmic formations, and liberation from endless births and deaths, and attain *nirvāṇa*.

We have thus completed the discussion on the gate of transmigration. We shall now explain the gate of cessation.

We must first examine the origins of life and death. Why are there worries, sadness and distress in our lives? Where do all these come from? They come from the incessant cycle of birth, old age and death (the saddest and most painful experiences in human life are old age and death). But where do old age and death come from? They come from rebirth; because of birth, there is naturally also aging and the end of life — death. Why does rebirth take place? Because of karmic formations, karmic results stemming from past karma; this is what is called the ‘debt that must be repaid.’ Where does human existence originate? It comes from delusional craving and clinging which generate the karmic causes of existence. Why do we want to crave and cling to something? This need is spurred on by the mind of desire (without desire one would not grasp and hold on to something). Where does desire come from? It comes from feeling (if we did not feel anything, then how would we give rise to desire?). Where does feeling come from? It comes from the six sense organs which come into contact with the six sense objects (without the sense organs being in contact with objects, there would naturally be no feeling). Where does contact come from? It comes from the six sense doors (for how could we contact sense objects without sense organs?). Where do the six sense doors come from? They come from materiality and mentality (without having the mind and body, which is materiality and mentality combined, how could there be the six sense doors?). Where do materiality and mentality come from? Their existence comes from the storehouse consciousness (if there were no consciousness, facilitating the formation of a foetus, then how would materiality and mentality be established?). Where does consciousness come from? It comes from karmic formations, based on the past ‘habitual actions’; consciousness enters the foetus under the influence of the karmic pull, if there were no karmic formations, then consciousness could not arise and rebirth could not take place. Where do karmic formations (volition) come from? They are generated by ignorance;

if the mind were not deluded, we would naturally not be able to perform deluded and reckless actions).

On the other hand, we can also ask how suffering, sadness, and the distress of ‘old age and death’ could be eradicated? We must not be reborn. If we do not want to be reborn, we must not create karma. If we do not want to have karmic formations, we must not engage in delusional craving. If we want to be without delusional craving, we must be free from desire. If we want to be without desire, we must not engage in deluded feelings. If we want to be free from feelings, we must not be in contact with the external world. If we want to be without contact, we must stop deludedly using the six sense organs. If we want to be without the six sense organs, we must refrain from creating the body and mind. If we want to be without the body and mind we must extinguish (*kong* 空) consciousness. For extinguishing consciousness, we must not engage in deluded habitual actions. If we want not to generate deluded habitual actions, we must get rid of ignorance. Thus, when ignorance is broken, the whole cycle of life and death will come to end.

We are now able to understand that the origins of the cycle of life and death can be traced back to ignorance. Thus, if we want to free ourselves from the cycle of life and death, we must try to eliminate ignorance. Similarly, if we want to catch thieves, we must attack their lair and capture their leader; only with such an effort will we be able to conquer them. This is a very appropriate metaphor to describe this process. But there is nevertheless one question left, how exactly can we completely extinguish ignorance? What ought to be done is that we should contemplate — using *prajñā* — the nature of ignorance which lacks any self and is empty of any substance. Because ignorance is a form of illusion, ordinary people are unknowingly confused by it, while *bodhisattvas*, with their awakened wisdom, understand that ignorance is merely a form of phantasmatic illusion. This can be explained by using a metaphor, the ‘sky flower’ (*konghua* 空華, *khapuṣpa*).¹⁹⁵ Although in

¹⁹⁵ According to *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, the Sanskrit term *khapuṣpa*, meaning ‘flower in the sky,’ is a common metaphor for something illusory, something that, according to common sense, should not exist. It seems that the so-called ‘sky flowers’ refer to a delusional mental state, when, due to physical or mental illness, one sees flower-

emptiness such flowers basically do not exist, a person with degenerated eyes might wrongly see it as really existing, while a person of clear sight will see clear emptiness. Here emptiness is a metaphor for the true mind, while the flower is a metaphor for ignorance. A person whose eyes are diseased is a metaphor for ordinary beings, while a person whose sight is clear is a metaphor for a *bodhisattva*; hence, being only able to see emptiness is in fact a metaphor for the essence of ignorance being in fact empty. If a person can understand that ignorance is nature-less, then ignorance will immediately disintegrate and vanish or become nonexistent.

Once ignorance has been eliminated, the true mind will be clearly manifested, and all things and principles will be understood with nothing left in the dark. Naturally, at that stage one will not form unreal attachments to the appearances of self and *dharmas*, and will not generate any kind of unwholesome attachments that create harmful karma; in other words, if ignorance perishes, so does volition. Since one does not create karma, then there will not be any such thing as consciousness based on karmic results; when habitual action is eliminated, so is consciousness. Without karmic consciousness, it is not possible to create the foetal mind and matter; when consciousness is eliminated, then mind and matter are also eliminated. Since there is no mentality and materiality, then how could there be such a thing as the six sense doors (if mind and matter are eliminated, then the six sense doors are also eliminated). If there are not the six sense doors, then who is there to form contacts (with six entrances destroyed so is the contact)? Without sensory contact, how can there be such a thing as feeling (when the contact is eliminated so is feeling)? Since there is no feeling, greedy desires are no longer generated (without feeling there is no desire). If there is no desire, how can there be deluded attachment (if desire is eliminated so is deluded grasping)? Since there is no deluded attachment, there is no *karma*

like apparitions floating in the sky. The *Dictionary* explains the use of the metaphor as follows:

Just as a person with macular degeneration might believe that the ‘flowers’ he perceives floating in the sky are real, when in fact they are actually a symptom of his disease, so too might an ignorant sentient being believe that he possesses a perduring soul (*ātman*) or self-nature (*svabhāva*) that exists in reality, when in fact this notion is simply a misperception of the reality of nonself (Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 432).

(when grasping is eliminated so is *karma*). If there is no *karma*, who is then to be reborn (if existence is eliminated so is rebirth)? Since one is not reborn, where are then old age and death (when rebirth ceases so do old age and death). In other words, when the former is eliminated, the latter does not arise. Therefore, we also say that when ignorance is eliminated, volition is also eliminated, and so on, and when rebirth is eliminated, so are old age and death. It is ignorance that is the origin of the cycle of life and death, which is why once it is eliminated, the remaining eleven links of dependant origination are automatically also eliminated. This is like chopping down a tree: if we chop the tree at its base, the entire tree will fall. As a result, once ignorance is cut off, we can ‘return’ (*huan* 還) to our true nature which has previously been obscured by ignorance, and at the same time ‘extinguish’ (*mie* 滅) the cycle of life and death which is bound by ignorance. This is the reason we call this the ‘gate of cessation’ (*huanmie men* 還滅門).

If, however, we float along in the current of life and death, ignorance will give rise to habitual actions, resulting in rebirth, life and death, and we will thus end up being trapped in the cycle of life and death forever. Conversely, if we can go against the current of life and death, then ignorance is eliminated and, consequently, life and death are also eliminated, and we ultimately attain freedom from all worldly afflictions.

While the abovementioned gate of rebirth is about the causal arising of the cycle of birth and death within this-worldly existence, and is thus of explanatory nature, the gate of cessation is of practical nature, as it has to do with the gate of enlightenment, expounding the practice with the aim to free ourselves from this world. Although the teachings of dependent origination explain that ‘because this exists therefore that exists; this arises and therefore that arises,’ and presents the twelve causes and conditions involved in the rebirth of sentient beings within the cycle of life and death, it is very fortunate that dependent origination can be reversed so that ‘because this does not exist, that does not exist; because this ceases, that also ceases,’ which means all living beings are able to return to self-nature and extinguish life and death. However, through wisdom (*prajñā*) which provides an insight into the emptiness of everything without exception, it can be understood that dependant origination has no existence of its own. Someone might object

saying, if the gate of cessation is the Dharma-gate of wise liberation from life and death, then why has it no existence? Because liberation exists only in relation to life and death, and all objects of existence are delusions, they are just ideas of ordinary people. The realisation of self-nature illuminates the original nonexistence of ignorance, because self-nature is unbound and does not require any liberation. Since there is no ignorance, there also exists no life and death, and since there is no life and death, what kind of liberation is there to be spoken about? In other words, since there is no law of rebirth, do we still need the Dharma-gate of cessation of life and death? This is how the argument that there is neither ignorance nor ending of ignorance can be understood.

A *bodhisattva* practises the profound perfection of wisdom through threefold contemplation in one mind,¹⁹⁶ and develops an insight into the [characteristics of] the three truths in each object of contemplation,¹⁹⁷ thus gaining a profound understanding that the substance of ignorance is the genuine emptiness of the true nature of things, and that *nidāna* such as volition, consciousness, and so on are also empty.

Master Yongjia remarked that:

the true nature of ignorance is the *buddha*-nature, and the body of empty illusion is in fact the dharma-body

buddha-nature and the Dharma-body are the true nature of things. This argument for ignorance being in essence empty¹⁹⁸ is an extremely powerful demonstration of truth. While the argument we read before equated

¹⁹⁶ The term *yixin sanguan* 一心三觀 is a Chinese Buddhist term, its most influential interpretation came from the Tiantai school. As the *Princeton Dictionary* aptly describes, the Tiantai renowned patriarch

Zhiyi's version entails a system of contemplative practice that leads to the attainment of insights into the nature of reality... [it] consists of the contemplations of the 'three truths' (*sandi*): emptiness, conventional existence, and their mean (Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 769).

¹⁹⁷ Here, the term *yijing sandi* 一境三諦 refers to the aforementioned threefold contemplation. Sometimes *sandi* 三諦 is also translated as the 'three characteristics.' That is three characteristics that are expounded on by the three noble truths and can be recognized to 'reside' in each object.

¹⁹⁸ The Chinese reads: *wuming dangti ji kong* 無明當體即空.

ignorance with the illusory and unreal, this argument is that the original essence of ignorance is itself true; when the five aggregates are removed from this and previous texts, all texts end up defining ignorance as empty in the sense of being illusory and unreal. It is only this notion of emptiness which then corresponds to the meaning of unsurpassed emptiness.

The statement that there is no ignorance speaks about the emptiness of the twelve *nidāna* of transmigration. At the same time, saying that there is no ending of ignorance, also means that the twelve *nidāna* of cessation are also empty. As an antidote against the former notion, we require the effort of contemplation. If there is a subject, there is also an object. This first notion still represents an incomplete perfection (*weiyuan* 未圓) of the Dharma of emptiness (*kongfa* 空法). The latter notion then engages with emptiness as something that can be emptied to an ultimate emptiness. This notion is able to further illuminate the genuine emptiness of the wisdom of *prajñā*. In this way, this latter not only eliminates the ignorance of attachment to self-nature, but also completely removes the ignorance of attachment to Dharma as such.

Furthermore, one must also note that these twelve links of dependant origination are actually another way of expressing the four noble truths, and one form of the technique of revealing and combining (*kai-he*), which, although different in name, are identical in essence. Ignorance, karmic formations, craving clinging, and becoming can be related to the noble truth of the cause of suffering (*jidi* 集諦). Consciousness, mind and matter, the six sense spheres, contact, feeling, birth, and old age and death, are related to the noble truth of the existence of suffering (*kudi* 苦諦). Wise contemplation on the twelve links of dependant origination (*nidāna*) relates to the noble truth of the path leading to liberation from suffering (*daodi* 道諦), and the extinguishing of the twelve links of the dependant origination relates to the noble truth of the cessation of suffering (*miedi* 滅諦). The gate of rebirth can be related to the two truths of the cause and the existence of suffering, while the gate of cessation can be related to the two truths of the path to, and the cessation of suffering. The following question could be asked: since the names are different, yet the meaning is the same, why then do we speak about

the four noble truths? We can answer that in this way we create guidelines which can be suitable for different living beings.

III Synthetic explanation: from the perspective of ultimate purification and liberation, and the genuine emptiness of the true nature of things, there are not twelve *nidāna* of transmigration of ordinary beings, nor are there the *nidāna* of cessation of liberated beings. Because of the nonexistence of the twelve links of the dependent origination, there is also no existence of their self-nature, since they have an empty nature like all *dharmas*. Since there is no ignorance and no old age and death, there is naturally also no extinction of ignorance or old age and death. It is therefore said that there is no ignorance, nor is there the ending of ignorance.

Here ends the part F4 on refuting the Dharma of the twelve *nidāna* of *pratyekabuddhas*.

F5 Refuting the Dharma of the four noble truths of *śrāvakas*

Wu ku, ji, mie, dao.

無苦、集、滅、道。

There is no suffering, arising, cessation or path.

I Preliminary explanations. This section is about the emptiness of the four noble truths. The four noble truths (*sidi* 四諦) comprise the truth of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path leading to liberation from suffering. The four truths are called ‘noble’ because they are realised by *arhats*; by practicing the path according to the four truths, one can transcend ordinary life and become an *arhat*. This practice is cultivated by the *śrāvakas* (*shengwen* 聲聞, *śrāvaka*). In Buddhism *śrāvakas* are awakened persons following the Lesser Vehicle (Hīnayāna), who became enlightened by listening to the Buddha’s teachings, which is why they are also called *shengwen* 聲聞 (‘listeners’). What exactly did they become awakened to? Having received the Buddha’s instruction, they came to understand that life and death in the three realms consists of an infinite cycle of ‘suffering’ (*ku* 苦, *duḥkha*, the noble truth of the existence of suffering (*kudi* 苦諦)). Concurrently, they also understand that the roots of suffering are desire, anger, and ignorance (i.e., the so-called ‘three poisons’), which are the result of bad *karma* created by physical, verbal, and mental actions ‘arisen’ (*ji* 集)¹⁹⁹ in the past (this is the second noble truth about the cause of suffering, *jidi* 集諦). In turn they were able to eliminate the three roots of suffering and obtain the bliss of liberation, the ‘cessation’ (*mie* 滅) of suffering (this is the third noble truth about the cessation of suffering, *miedi*

¹⁹⁹ If the original Chinese meaning of the character *ji* 集 is closer to ‘accumulation,’ in its Buddhist use the term translates as ‘origination’ or ‘arising,’ Sanskrit *samudaya*. In the meaning ‘origination’ it also appears in the Chinese version of the second noble truth, *samudayasatya* or the ‘truth of origination,’ *jidi* 集諦.

滅諦). But in order to liberate themselves from suffering and dispel the accumulation of past karma, they had to cultivate the ‘path’ (*dao* 道, this is the fourth noble truth of the path, *daodi* 道諦).

Here is a question we cannot ignore, all those who had been enlightened by having listened to the Buddha’s teaching on the four noble truths are called *śrāvaka* (*shengwen* 聲聞). But we need to know that although the Buddha was a person who expounded the teaching and then passed away, his teachings remained after his death which are then the indirectly expounded teachings, circulated by means of *sūtras* and scriptures. Ordinary humans, who became enlightened through the Buddha’s teachings after he had died, can also be called *śrāvakas*. It is by no means necessary to have heard the teaching directly from the Buddha to become a *śrāvaka*. If this were not so, after the Buddha’s time in this world, there would have been no more *śrāvakas* and similar distinguished disciples, and the awakened people of the Three Vehicles would only have existed in the time of Buddha.

II Analytic explanation: (1) The expression ‘the noble truth of the origin of suffering’ (*kudi* 苦諦) has the character *ku* 苦 which refers to its oppressive nature²⁰⁰ (it also means experiencing pain and distress). The term describes the oppression and disturbances experienced by all living beings subjected to various kinds of mental and physical suffering. This is the reason we speak about its nature as being oppressive. The *Lotus-sūtra* says:

There is no peace in the three realms, as all living beings are full of suffering.

There are five kinds of suffering:

- (i) Suffering in relation to the body: all kinds of ailments of old age and dying, the weariness of hunger and thirst, ugliness and deformity, and so on.

²⁰⁰ As with those highlighted in the following annotations, the Chinese term *bipo xing* 逼迫性 represents a standardized translation of the Buddha’s description of the nature (*xing* 性) of the four noble truths. It denotes the ‘oppressive nature’ of suffering. For more details about Chinese terminology related to the characteristics of the four noble truth, see the following few footnotes.

- (ii) Suffering in relation to the mind: the sufferings of greed, hatred, ignorance, arrogance, envy, resentment, worries, anxieties, and so on.
- (iii) Suffering in relation to the external world: sufferings because of fires, floods, thunderstorms and lightning, the assaults upon us of cold, heat, rain and wind, as well as the natural disasters of drought, flood, pestilence and disease, and sufferings incurred from poisonous snakes and scorpions, as well as dangerous beasts.
- (iv) Suffering in relation to human affairs: sufferings inflicted by war, thieves, social humiliation and violence, menace and oppression, ridicule and blame, resentment, animosity and murder, jealousy, losing loved ones, custody and punishment, all [to be taken as included] down to internal political strife and foreign aggressions.
- (v) Suffering in relation to death: the suffering due to a degraded, unfortunate rebirth (*equ* 惡趣, *durgati*).

In brief, our bodies are plagued by suffering and the pains of old age and death, our minds are disturbed by greed, hatred, ignorance, and arrogance, while at any time we are also troubled by natural calamities and man-made disasters, and finally also by rebirth in the realms of hell, of hungry ghosts and animals.

The sufferings of our bodies and minds are internal suffering, while those related to the outer world are external suffering. Moreover, the suffering experienced due to human affairs belongs to communal suffering (*gongku* 共苦), and lower rebirth. What humans experience in this life, can be direct karmic result (e.g., the body, *shen* 身) or indirect (i.e., the circumstances that one is born into, the communities, countries and all objects of the external world); both are sources of torment, they are binding, dangerous, painful, impermanent, which is why they are called the noble truth of the origin of suffering (*kudi*).

Because of all these kinds of suffering, we must urgently attempt to get free from them and understand their source, which is why we have to seek out the origin (*ji* 集) of suffering.

(2) The noble truth of the origin of suffering: origination (*ji* 集) is ‘incurring’ in nature (*zhaogan xing* 招感性).²⁰¹ The next question is, whence arises the above-mentioned suffering? It has neither fallen from the sky, nor born out of the earth. It was neither bestowed upon us by a deity, even less so given to us by others. It is, however, created by our own self. Greed, hatred, ignorance, and conceit, which arise in our own minds, spur the creation of all bad karmas due to ignorance and then bringing about (*zhaoji* 招集) the results of karmic retribution. Which is why we speak about its incurring nature (*zhao ganxing* 招感性). The noble truth of the origination of suffering (*jidi* 集諦) is desire and craving, which is of karmic origin, and gives rise to wrong views and thinking and leads to suffering, birth, and death in the three realms.

²⁰¹ *Zhaogan xing* 招感性 refers to the main property of the origination of suffering, denoting its ‘being of a nature which incurs the experience of suffering.’ This is one of the standardized Chinese terms for the Buddha’s description of the four noble truths. In Chinese Buddhist scriptures the term *zhao* 招 means to ‘invite’ or to ‘bring about.’ In the same meaning it occurs also in combination with the aforementioned character *ji* 集. Thus, for example, the phrase *zhaoji kubao* 招集苦報 is commonly translated as ‘bring about painful retribution’ or ‘retribution of suffering.’ The character *gan* 感 is interpreted in the sense of stimulative resonance, that is to factors able to incite suffering in sentient beings. In Chinese Buddhist terminology, the term *ganying* 感應 denotes ‘stimulus and response’ or ‘sympathetic resonance.’ According to *The Princeton Dictionary*:

the rubric of *ganying* is just as prevalent in popular religious tracts in China, where it refers to the principle of moral retribution (*bao* 報) (Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 313).

Here, Binzong is not using the term *ganxing* 感性 in its modern meaning (sensitivity), but instead in the sense of either ‘resonant nature’ or ‘characteristic of feeling’ suffering. The entire phrase *zhaogan xing* 招感性 is mentioned in Chinese Buddhist scriptures expounding the Yogācāra interpretational framework known as the three turnings of the wheel of Dharma, Chinese *sanzhuan falun* 三轉法輪. More importantly, terms like *zhaogan xing* 招感性, *kexiuxing* 可修性, and *kezhengxing* 可證性 all appear in previous Chinese commentaries on the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*. Such, for instance, is the *Explanation of the sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* (*Borexin jing jie* 般若心經解) by the late Ming and early Qing scholar Xu Changzhi 徐昌治 (1582-1672). In connection with the four noble truths, the terms are also mentioned in the Ming dynasty *Explanation of the sūtra of 42 chapters* (*Sishi er zhang jing jie* 佛說四十二章經解) written by Zhi Xu 智旭, and so on. In this translation, I have followed the translations given in the translation of ‘The Flower adornment sūtra with commentary’ (2018).

(3) Because of the endless pain and suffering of life and death, we can start seeking a right path, leading to the extinction (*mie* 滅) of suffering, which is liberation from karmic results. In the expression for the noble truth of cessation of suffering (*miedi* 滅諦), the character for ‘cessation’ (*mie*) refers to the attainability (*kezhengxing* 可證性)²⁰² of liberation. It means ‘extinguishing’ (*mie*) the suffering of the vexations of life and death, and ‘realising’ (*zheng* 證) the joy of ‘cessation’ (*mie*), of *nirvāṇa*. We therefore speak about ‘realisability.’ In other words, the meaning of ‘extinction’ (*jimie* 寂滅)²⁰³ is the ‘silencing’ (*ji* 寂) of worries and anxieties, and the consequent eternal ‘elimination’ (*mie* 滅) of life and death. We therefore say that this is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering (*miedi* 滅諦). These are the fruits of attaining the stage of a *śrāvaka*.

If we want to extinguish suffering, break down karmic accumulations, and realise *nirvāṇa*, we must therefore urgently find the right method of carry this out, the path (*dao* 道).

(4) A method for this is expounded in the fourth noble truth, the path leading to awakening (*daodi* 道諦): the path (*dao*) is being able to practice liberation from suffering (*kexiuxing* 可修性).²⁰⁴ The suffering of life and death is a karmic result, stemming from ignorance; however, it is possible to realise the cessation of such suffering (i.e., *nirvāṇa*) if we practice the path (*dao*) in

²⁰² *Kezheng xing* 可證性 is also the standard Chinese translation for the Buddha’s characterization of the nature of the cessation of suffering. *Kezheng* 可證 would be more correctly translated as ‘being able to realize,’ and so the entire term would have to be translated as the ‘nature of realizability.’

²⁰³ The term *jimie* 寂滅 ‘extinction/extinguishing’ is the Chinese semantic translation of the Sanskrit term *nirvāṇa*. Aside from this translation, which focuses on the meaning of the original word, Chinese also possesses a so-called phonetic translation, which reads *niepan* 涅槃. The latter was probably coined after the Pali form *nibbāna* ‘cooling, extinction.’

²⁰⁴ The term *kexiu xing* 可修性 means, ‘having the nature/characteristics of being able to be practiced.’ Again, the term *xiu* 修 is closer to ‘cultivation’ than to pure ‘practice’ (*xing* 行) or ‘carrying out’. Still, in the above translation I follow the ‘The Flower adornment *sūtra* with commentary’ (2018).

accordance with a method for eliminating the arising of suffering. Once karmic delusions are eliminated, the breaking away and realisation of liberation (i.e., breaking worries and vexations and realising *nirvāṇa*) can occur immediately. But what is the right method for this? There are many methods for attaining *nirvāṇa* (*daofa* 道法), which can be presented as the three trainings, namely the cultivation of morality, meditation, and wisdom (*jie ding hui* 戒定慧), in other words, the path towards enlightenment comprises the 37 factors (*sanshiqi daopin* 三十七道品).²⁰⁵ By such cultivation, we can attain our final goal, namely, ending the cycle of life and death and realise *nirvāṇa*. We, therefore, speak about the ability to follow this path. The path (*dao*) also means the ability to thoroughly understand liberation through understanding the phenomena of life.

To recapitulate, the noble truth of the nature of suffering is about the unsatisfactoriness of all phenomena, which originates, according to the noble truth of the origin of suffering, in desire and other karmic delusion. The noble truth of the cessation of suffering informs us that it is possible to get away from the vexations of life and death and reach the quietude of *nirvāṇa*, which can be achieved by practising insight (*vipāśyanā*) meditation, which leads towards enlightenment and is presented in the fourth noble truth about the path to awakening. We could also say that experiencing the karmic results of life and death is called suffering (*ku* 苦), the bodily and mental accumulations of past karmic tendencies is called the arising of causes (*ji* 集), *nirvāṇa* is their extinction (*mie* 滅), and the cultivation required to reach *nirvāṇa* is the eightfold path (*dao* 道). Overall, the reality of human life is the experience of ‘pain’; the suffering of human life comes from karmic ‘accumulation’ incurred by desire and other unwholesome roots; if we want to attain *nirvāṇa*, the peaceful and liberated state of ‘cessation,’ we must

²⁰⁵ In the Sanskrit Buddhist canon the term *sanshiqi daopin* 三十七道品 usually appears in the meaning ‘37 wings of enlightenment’ or ‘37 factors pertaining to awakening,’ that is the Sanskrit *bodhipāṅśikadharmā*. These include: the four foundations of mindfulness (4), the four right efforts or abandonments (4), the four requisites of supranormal power (4), the five spiritual faculties (5), the five mental powers (5), the seven factors of enlightenment (7), and the noble eightfold path (8). See further Buswell & Lopez (2014: 133).

cultivate the eightfold ‘path’ and extinguish all anxieties and vexations. Suffering is the outcome of the arising of causes, and this accumulation is the cause of suffering. Cessation is the objective for cultivating the path, the path is the instrument for seeking the cessation and elimination of suffering. The first two noble truths (suffering and its causes) relate to the world of ordinary beings, while the second two truths (about cessation and the path) relate to the world of awakened beings. The first noble truth about suffering addresses the unsatisfactoriness of human life, the second noble truth addresses the origin of suffering, the third noble truth the cessation of suffering, and the fourth noble truth expounds the path to liberation.

If we take a broad view at both Dharmas concerning both transcending and living in this world, neither of these teachings can do without applying the two words ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ (*yinyuan* 因緣). This is what is meant by effects cannot be separated from their causes, and there are no causes that do not give rise to any effects. For example, if a seed is a cause, then the fruits born from the plant are the effect. How could there have been fruits born, if the seeds did not exist? If we now speak about the four noble truths, then the second noble truth about the arising of suffering is the cause, while the first noble truth about suffering is the effect. Moreover, the fourth noble truth about the path is the cause, while the third noble truth about the cessation is the effect. In other words, karmic origination (*ji* 集) is the cause of suffering, and suffering is the result of that arising; the path is the cause of cessation, while cessation is the result of that path. Without the causes, how could there be the ‘inciting’ (*zhaogan* 招感) of the fruits of suffering, old age, and death? Without cultivation (*xiu* 修) of the path to awakening as the cause, how could there be the effect of realizing (*zheng* 證) the tranquillity and cessation of suffering in *nirvāṇa*? Sufferings are karmic retributions experienced by all living beings, suffering arises because of life and death in the three realms. The *karmic* afflictions are given rise to (*qi* 起) by all sentient beings, and are thus the cause of suffering, and indeed life-and-death in the three realms. Cessation is the truth realised by the noble ones and is thus the comforting

result (*leguo* 樂果)²⁰⁶ of transcending this world. The path is the Dharma-gate (gate of awakening) practised by the noble ones, and thus the comforting cause (*leyin* 樂因) of transcending this world. The first two truths about suffering and its origins are the cause and effect of this-worldly defilement, and thus belong to worldly delusions. The second two truths about the path and cessation are the cause and effect of being without desire and ignorance (i.e., to be untainted; *anāsrava*) and thus transcending this world, reaching awakening. Also, the first two truths relieve suffering, while the last two truths provide comfort [remove suffering].²⁰⁷ Because ordinary people are deluded, they condition the effects of ‘suffering,’ life-and-death with *karma* as the cause. Because a wise person is awakened, they use the ‘path’ as the cause to realise the comforting effects of ‘cessation.’ An ordinary person can generate cause and effect, which is suffering due to desires, followed by birth and death. The awakened person has deep insight into cause and effect for the realisation of cessation, reached by the practice of the path. Although the reason for nirvanic cessation is inherently possessed by everyone, it is however revealed only through the path; the path can therefore reveal, and cessation is what is revealed.

If we discuss the four truths in light of their order of [realisation], the causes as coming before effects, then they ought to be listed as accumulation, suffering, path, and cessation. Why do we then usually first speak about the effects and only later about the causes? There is, of course, a reason, it is because effects are easy to recognize but the causes difficult to know. If we want to make it easy to instruct about and guide others using them, we must thus first reveal the nature of suffering and make the [student] abandon it in disgust, and only in turn reveal the karmic causes, causing them to break down the accumulation of suffering. Subsequently, we are then able to point to the blissful nature of *nirvāṇa*, in order to cause it to be admired and in turn

²⁰⁶ This term is usually also translated as ‘joyful fruit.’ Here, we are adhering to the meaning which resonates with the most fitting translation of the phrase *yu le* 與樂, namely ‘providing comfort.’

²⁰⁷ The Chinese original makes use of the phrase *yu le* 與樂, which usually appears along with *ba ku* 拔苦 ‘removing suffering.’ The word *ye lu*, which can be translated as ‘providing comfort,’ is usually mentioned as an attribute of the actions of *bodhisattvas* or *buddhas*.

again use the Dharma of the path to make the student carry it out and adhere to it. It is important to make the students of Buddhism ‘know suffering and break accumulation, admire cessation and practise the path.’ This is the Buddha’s way of enlightening the masses of sentient beings. Such is a skilful and convenient mean to seduce minds which are receptive only to the instructions of the teaching of ‘lesser faculties’ (*xiaoji* 小機),²⁰⁸ which however is indeed worth imitating.

The above discussion of the principles of suffering, accumulation, cessation, and the path represents their general explanation. But the question still remains, why do we name these principles the noble truths (*di* 諦)? What does *di* 諦 actually mean? It has two different meanings:

- (1) to examine (*guan* 觀) and
- (2) that which is true (*zhen* 真).

‘Investigating’ denotes ‘being aware of’ and ‘to know,’ thus referring to the knowledge-related aspect. ‘True,’ on the other hand, means ‘not false,’ which refers to the aspect of external reality (*jing* 境). What the term thus means is that, when we ‘investigate’ life and death within the three realms, we learn the ‘truth’ that suffering cannot make one joyful (*ling le* 令樂). This is therefore called the noble truth of the nature of suffering (*kudi*). If we ‘investigate’ greed and other karmic afflictions (*yehuo* 業惑), then it is the ‘truth’ that the capacity of ‘inciting’ (*neng gan* 能感)²⁰⁹ life and death within the three realms cannot be prevented. This is called the noble truth of the origination of suffering. When we ‘investigate’ the fundamental essence²¹⁰ of *nirvāṇa*, its ‘truth’ is cessation and eternal separation from the cycle of life and death. This kind of truth is, therefore, called the noble truth of the cessation of suffering. When we investigate the *dharmic* path of transcending this-worldly existence, the ‘truth’ about it can cause all living beings to

²⁰⁸ Binzong uses the term *xiaoji* 小機 ‘lesser faculties’ to refer to the *Hīnayāna* teaching.

²⁰⁹ Here, the word *gan* 感 is interpreted in accordance with the meaning of the standardized term *zhaoganxing* 招感性 in the context of the Buddha’s teaching on the four noble truths.

²¹⁰ Binzong uses the term *liti* 理體, Muller translates the term as ‘fundamental substance or body of all things.’ Since *nirvāṇa* cannot be said to possess any ‘substance,’ it would be more suitable to speak about ‘essence.’

separate themselves from suffering and attain joyful bliss. This truth is therefore called the noble truth of the path to enlightenment. There also exists another formulation: we are able to investigate that suffering is brought about by [whatever is] arising, but if we want to eliminate the result of suffering, we must eliminate (*duan* 斷) the cause of arising. If we want to eliminate the causes of origination, we must practice (*xiu* 修) the path to enlightenment. When this meritorious enterprise is brought to perfection, we can end the cycle of life and death forever, and then suddenly attain *nirvāṇa*. The true and complete understanding of this principle is called *di* 諦 (the noble truth).

Because ordinary people are confused about the principles of these truths, they are unaware that life and death make up suffering — this is confusion about the principle of the truth of suffering. On the contrary, they believe that suffering is bliss and thus regard what is false to be true. Consequently, they give rise to afflictions and create karma — this is the confusion about the principle of the truth of accumulation. When karmic retribution is suffered in an endless circle of rebirth, ordinary people are unable to know that its extinguishing in *nirvāṇa* is realisable — this constitutes confusion about the principle of the truth of cessation. When they willingly suffer the hardships of rebirth, they remain eternally embodied as a sentient being and, at the same time, unwilling to engage in the learning of Buddhist practice — this is called confusion about the principle of the truth of the path. This is what constitutes ordinary people's confusions about the principles of noble truth and its consequence of suffering within the circle of life and death.

A sage on the other hand, will be awakened about the truth of these principles and thus come to realise that the three realms itself *are* suffering. Thus, will attain the realisation of the principle of the noble truth of suffering. Moreover, such a person will be able to investigate the origin of suffering, attaining the realisation of the principle of the noble truth of origination. At the same time, he will also know that there exists a possibility to realise the principle of extinction of suffering and, in this way, attain the realisation of the principle of the noble truth of cessation. Such a person will also understand the cultivation of several different kinds of Dharma-gates of enlightenment, possessing a realisation of the principle of the noble truth of the path. It is only practising the path relying on these truths which allows one to attain [all]

objectives of elimination and realisation.²¹¹ This is the way in which a sage-like person attains liberation by realising the principles of the noble truths.

After attaining enlightenment, the Buddha first explained the Dharma-gate of the four noble truths to a group of five Buddhist monks, who were assembled around him in the Deer Park (*Mṛgadāva*). Since the teaching was explained in three separate parts, it is also called the Three Turnings of the Dharma Wheel (*san zhuan fa lun* 三轉法輪). *Zhuan fa lun* 轉法輪 or ‘turning the Dharma wheel’ means teaching the Dharma. This is a metaphor, denoting the Dharma taught by the Buddha himself, whose aim was nothing but to deliver all beings from suffering and help them attain happiness and reach the other shore, *nirvāṇa*. Since this is just like the turning of the wheel of a cart, which can conduct people to their desired destination, the teaching is thus also referred to as the ‘turning of the Dharma wheel.’

(1) The indicative aspect of turning (*shizhuan* 示轉):

This is the coercive nature of suffering, this is the experience incurred of origination, this is the possibility to realise cessation, and this is the path which can be cultivated to attain enlightenment.²¹²

(2) The turning of persuasion (*quanzhuan* 勸轉):

This is suffering; you should understand it. This is the origin of suffering; you should eliminate it. This is the cessation of suffering; you should realise it. This is the path to the cessation of suffering; you should practice it.

²¹¹ The expressions ‘elimination’ and ‘realization,’ Chinese *duan* 斷 and *zheng* 證, denote the two necessary modes of awakening, practiced in the entire process of transformation from the state of being an ordinary person (*fanfu* 凡夫) to a sage (*sheng* 聖者). Generally speaking, these terms speak about the ‘elimination’ of the causes of suffering and ‘realization’ of the results of the path of enlightenment.

²¹² This is my translation of these well-known propositions, which I have adapted to fit the use and context within this text. A more elaborate translation would read as follows:

This is suffering and its nature is oppressive. This is the cause of suffering, and its nature ‘incurs.’ This is the cessation of suffering, which is attainable in nature. This is the way to the cessation of suffering, which is practicable by nature.

This is a slightly adapted and amended version of the translation found in ‘The Flower adornment sūtra with commentary’ (2018).

(3) The turning of realisation (*zhengzhuan* 證轉):

This is suffering; I have already understood it. This is the origin of suffering; I have already eliminated it. This is the cessation of suffering; I have already realized it. This is the path to the cessation of suffering; I have already practiced it.

Why do we have to speak about these three turnings in this specific order? Because the basic nature of living beings can vary, being with or without different kinds of obstacles. Firstly, the turning of indicating is directly instructing the essence of the four truths, making the student aware of the nature of suffering and allowing them to eliminate the origin of its causation, admire cessation, and practice the path. Those people who are intelligent by nature, will become awakened immediately after hearing these truths. Secondly, in the turning of persuasion the Buddha attends to those among his followers, who were of blunter intellectual capacity, those who after hearing the Dharma for the first time could not directly grasp the truths. Accordingly, he warns and encourages them to practise the Dharma. Those amongst them, who are of average intelligence, will, upon hearing the truths, accept the Dharma by believing in it. Thirdly, the Buddha makes the turning of realisation: since the Buddha was compassionate towards all, he was also concerned about ordinary beings of less sharp intellectual power, who could neither believe in the noble truths nor understand them. Hence, he presented himself as a paragon of realisation, tirelessly repeating the truths and encouraging these simplest amongst all people. For the simplest amongst humans could only come to understand the truth in this way. The above three stages are called the ‘three turnings of the Dharma wheel.’ Those who attain the fruits of the path by practising this Dharma-gate are called *śrāvaka*. According to their level of attainment, the fruits of realisation of the *śrāvaka* can be divided into four stages:

The initial fruit (realisation) is called ‘stream-enterer,’ *xutuohuan* 須陀洹, Sanskrit *srotāpanna*, the Sanskrit translates as ‘advancing along the stream,’ or ‘entering the stream.’ This describes advancing along and entering the stream of the sages (*ārya*). By virtue of the 16 mental states being untainted,

comprised of the eight tolerances and eight kinds of cognition,²¹³ one can eliminate the 88 declivities²¹⁴ that cause the disturbances of mistaken view²¹⁵ in the three realms, by realising just the initial fruit of entering the stream.

The second fruit is that of ‘once-returner’ (*situohan* 斯陀含, *sakṛdāgāmin*), the Sanskrit term means ‘to come back once,’ because one was only able to completely remove six of the nine grades of delusions of thought²¹⁶ pertaining to the realm of desire, so that three more remain to be eliminated. Therefore, one must return to the realm of desire once more.

The third fruit is that of a ‘nonreturner’ (*anahan* 阿那含, *anāgāmin*), the Sanskrit term translates as ‘not returning,’ which means that one has already eliminated the remaining three grades of delusion of the realm of desire. Because one is consequently devoid of all causes of affliction in the realm of desire, in turn all effects of life-and-death also cease to exist. Therefore, one

²¹³ In Binzong’s account the so-called ‘16 mental states’ (*shiliu xin* 十六心) consist of the eight kinds of tolerance (*baren* 八忍) and eight kinds of cognition (*bazhi* 八智). Generally speaking, there exist different accounts as to the actual nature as well as the precise listing of these 16 mental states. What unites the views, however, is the fact that they are supposed to be derived from the four noble truths, four mental states for each truth, of which two represent forms of cognition and the other two kinds of tolerance.

²¹⁴ The ‘88 declivities’ (*bashiba shi* 八十八使) are the mental states within the conditioned world. The *Abhidharmakośa* speaks of the 32 declivities in the realm of desire, 28 in the material and 28 in the nonmaterial realm. They are all derivations of the ten basic declivities, *shi shi* 十使.

²¹⁵ *Jianhuo* 見惑 are conceptual errors, related to the way in which one ‘sees’ (*jian* 見) reality. They are mistaken apprehensions, which can be remedied by insight into the truth of reality. The aforementioned 88 declivities are essentially all ‘mistaken views.’

²¹⁶ The Chinese *jiupin sihuo* 九品思惑 is an abbreviated form of *jiudi jiupin sihuo* 九地九品思惑 ‘nine levels of nine classes of delusion,’ which refers to the second set of hindrances one faces on the path to enlightenment. While the first set of 88 declivities were in essence ‘mistaken views’ or ‘delusions of view,’ these later all belong to the category of ‘mistaken thoughts’ (*sihuo* 思惑) or ‘delusions of thought.’ While the first set comprises 88 ‘items,’ the latter consists of altogether 88 kinds of delusion. Moreover, the latter predominate in the altogether nine realms of desire, nine material and nine immaterial realms, being born out of desire, anger, foolishness and pride. In the above text, the attainment of the second fruit relates exclusively to the nine delusions which exist in the realms of desire.

does not have to return to this realm anymore. This is called the stage of ‘nonreturner.’

The fourth is called the fruit of being an ‘*arhat*’ (*aluohan* 阿羅漢). This term translates as ‘birthless,’ which means that the person who has attained it is not reborn within the three realms. After one has been able to cut off the nine delusions of thought within the realm of desire, one proceeds by focusing one’s energy on cutting off one’s bonds within the next two realms (the material and nonmaterial realms), starting with the realm of the [subtle] materiality of the five heavens of no return²¹⁷ of the fourth *dhyāna* (meditative absorption) level. Each of these realms is divided into four lands, and each of these lands has nine grades, so that one breaks away from altogether 8 x 9, that is 72 grades of delusion, which together with the nine delusions from the realm of desire make up 9 x 9, that is 81 grades of delusion. After one has cut away all these delusions, one has realised the four fruits of liberation.

Because the two kinds of delusions of views and thoughts (*jianhuo* 見惑 and *sihuo* 思惑) are the causes of life-and-death in the three realms, and because by attaining the four fruits these causes have been annihilated, their consequences are also gone by themselves. Consequently, one does not return to be reborn in the three realms, which is why the *arhat* is called ‘birthless.’ These are the ultimate fruits (realisations) of the Lesser Vehicle. The initial fruit constitutes the phase of seeing the path; when we first give rise to undefiled cognition and clearly see the principles of the noble truths. The second and the third fruits constitute the stage of practising the path; after we have seen the truth, we use their principles to practise true observation. The fourth fruit constitutes the stage without learning; when the delusions of sight and thought have been exhausted and we have thoroughly realised the noble

²¹⁷ The expression ‘five heavens of no return’ (*wu buhuan tian* 五不還天) is another name for the ‘five pure abodes’ (*wu jingju tian* 五淨居天), Sanskrit *śuddhāvāsa*. They represent ‘the five highest of the eight heavens that constitute the fourth meditative absorption (*dhyāna*) of the subtle-materiality realm (*rūpa-dhātu*).’ They are collectively the abode of the divinities called the *śuddhāvāsakāyika* gods. The five heavens are: the pure abodes, the *avṛha*, *atapa*, *sudṛśa*, *sudarśana*, and *akaniṣṭha*.

truth, so that we need not practice or learn anymore. When all my lives have already been exhausted, I have realised the cognition of the noble truth of suffering; when the pure practices have already been established, I have realised the cognition of the noble truth of cessation; when all tasks have already been accomplished (*suozuo yi ban* 所作已辦),²¹⁸ I have realised the cognition of the noble truth of the path. When I am not the object of rebirth anymore, I have realised the cognition of the noble truth of origination. All the above four fruits belong to the category of the Small Vehicle of Buddhism — the *śrāvaka*.

The Buddhadharma is divided into mundane and supramundane, whereas at the supramundane level it is further subdivided into the Two Vehicles of Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna. The Lesser Vehicle is the Buddhist teaching as envisioned by individuals — self-benefiting, as its objective consists in saving oneself. It pursues liberation (*jietuo* 解脫) from the cycle of life-and-death which is purely supramundane²¹⁹ in essence. The Major Vehicle is the Buddhist version of a doctrine for the masses, focusing on aiding others, its objective being to save the entire world. In this way, it aims to deliver all living beings from suffering. This latter teaching both transcends the three realms and at the same time adapts itself to the this-worldly existence. Because the Lesser Vehicle's aspirations lie in completely freeing the three realms from life-and-death, its search for realisation contains a strong bent towards the emptiness of *nirvāṇa* as the very ultimate. For this reason, aside from improving oneself, it does not recognize the resolution to help relieve all living beings from suffering. This is also why we call it the 'Lesser Vehicle': the word 'vehicle' refers to carrying someone somewhere; metaphorically it thus means that if someone rides on a boat or in a cart and is being carried by it, then one is also able to reach the desired destination. The Buddhadharma is capable of carrying people from the land of ordinary existence to the sacred lands. This is the reason we call it a vehicle (*cheng*

²¹⁸ The phrase *suozuo yi ban* refers to the *śrāvaka*'s duties of realization (*zheng* 證) and elimination (*duan* 斷).

²¹⁹ Here, the terminological pair 'mundane' and 'supramundane' stand for the opposition between *shijian* 世間 and *chu shijian* 出世間, which literally mean '[of] this world' and 'exiting the world.'

乘, Sanskrit *yāna*). There exist differences between Major, Medium, and Lesser Vehicles. *Bodhisattvas*, for example, belong to the Major Vehicle, not only saving themselves but also willing and capable of saving the others. Their undertaking resembles a large vehicle, such as a train, which can transport many people, and which possesses great capacity to so do. The *pratyekabuddhas* belong to the ‘Medium Vehicle.’ Because they are more capable of delving into latent habituated tendencies,²²⁰ they consequently abide at a higher level of existence than the *śrāvaka*. The *śrāvaka* constitute the Lesser Vehicle and are only able to save themselves and not others. For this reason, their endeavours are thought of as a ‘small vehicle,’ such as a bicycle, which is only able to carry one individual and no one else. For this reason, this teaching is considered to be of a less significant force than the others. In their essence, all Dharmas (teachings) that exist in this world cannot disregard the spheres of karmic forces and the principle of causality. Since the members of the Lesser Vehicle aspire to transcend the three realms, seeking liberation from the cycle of life and death, therefore in regard to the karmic forces and the causal laws of this world, such as the six destinies of rebirth, they pay great attention to clearly and thoroughly understanding all *dharma*s of life and death in the three realms. In other words, they have a detailed understanding of the arising, abiding, changing, and extinction of all things that exist in this world. They aspire to grasp everything that is controlled by karmic forces, while at the same time they are also unable to escape the law of causality. Hence, life and death, which they most loathe and dread, are also not an exception to these *karmic* forces and causality. Consequently, they seek causes by setting out from the effects, trying to understand their own self-existence and striving to attain liberation with

²²⁰ The term *xiqi* 習氣, Sanskrit *vāsanā*, denotes the so-called ‘latent tendencies’ or ‘habituations.’ These are subtle tendencies or habits in the mind, created as a result of one’s exposure to positive or negative objects. As such, *vāsanā* are described as subtle forms of affliction, which hinder the attainment of *buddha*-hood. In the *Yogācāra*, the habitual tendencies ‘perfume’ the ‘seeds’ of wholesome and unwholesome actions that are implanted in the storehouse consciousness. In this sense *vāsanā* can be either useful or not, which is why in the above translation the verb *qin* 侵 has been translated as ‘to delve into’ rather than to ‘attack’ or similarly. The *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論 distinguishes between linguistic predispositions, grasping-at-self predispositions, and cause-of-existence predispositions (Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 960-961).

respect to karmic delusions. A follower of the Lesser Vehicle is aware that all actions (*xing* 行) are impermanent, and that the myriad *dharmas* are all devoid of self-nature, trying to obtain the consolation of nirvanic quietude and tranquillity as ultimate destination. This is the only goal of practice of the followers of the Lesser Vehicle. The Dharma-gate of the four noble truths belongs to this category.

Conversely speaking, how are we able to claim that there is no suffering, origination, cessation, and the path? When a *bodhisattva* uses the profound perfection of wisdom, they clearly see that the substance of suffering etc. is truly empty of self-nature, it is the original condition of purity (*qingjing benran* 清淨本然). Therefore, they are not only without mundane illusions of the noble truths of suffering and the origination of suffering, but the transmundane truths of path and cessation also have no marks of their own when it comes to the substance of the true nature of genuine emptiness. Because all *dharmas* are empty in appearances, there is no such thing as the existence of origination and cessation, nor anything like cultivation and realisation. The emptiness of self-nature knows no elimination of life and death (it is without suffering), nor does it know the elimination of mental afflictions (it is without origination). As such, self-nature is complete (in regard to wisdom and virtue) and basically knows no dependence on cultivation (there is no path), while it has nothing to realise (no cessation). A Tiantai Master once said:

Aggregates and senses are all true thusness; there is no suffering to be abandoned, while the mental afflictions are *bodhi*. There is no origination that can be cut off. What is partial and wicked is in fact balanced and upright, for there is no path to be practised. Life-and-death are *nirvāṇa*, for there is no cessation that can be realised.

This means the same. There exists yet another explanation: because suffering and accumulation depend on nothing else but the *dharmas* of the five aggregates, when the *bodhisattva* practises the profound perfection of wisdom and sees clearly that the five aggregates are empty, this implies that suffering and accumulation do not rely on anything. This is what is meant by:

if there were no skin, the hair would have nothing to be attached to.²²¹

This implies that, if there existed no elements from which things are meant to arise — the five aggregates — there will naturally also not exist any arisen things, suffering or origination. Subsequently, since there is no object of cessation, suffering or origination, then there also exists no subject of cessation, path or enlightenment. But as long as all living beings are deluded, we can still say that the four noble truths can remedy their delusion. Because *bodhisattvas* are said to be awakened, they possess a perfect understanding of the truth that the substance of suffering etc. are completely empty. Consequently, we say that there exists no suffering, accumulation, cessation, or path.

III Further Discussion: the Dharma of the four noble truths is thus the fundamental teaching of Buddhism, because all *sūtras* and scriptures set out from the four noble truths. But, if we take a superficial look at the entirety of Buddhist teaching, it appears as if these four truths belong exclusively to the Dharma practised by the *śrāvaka* of the Lesser Vehicle, while in fact it also underlies all Dharma-gates of the Mahāyāna. How do we explain that? To cut a long story short, a complete understanding of this principle requires that we provide another detailed explanation of the character *di* 諦. When we say that *di* means ‘truth,’ what we want to say is that the truth is instrumentalized for treating suffering etc., where suffering is phenomena and truth is their underlying principle. It is further the principle of the three truths. The four noble truths (suffering, origination, cessation, and path) each contain the principles of the three truths, that is the ultimate truth (*zhendi* 真諦, *paramārthasatya*), the conventional truth (*sudi* 俗諦, *saṃvṛtisatya*),²²² and

²²¹ This is a very common metaphor used in Chinese Buddhist scriptures. It can be, for instance found, in the Ming Dynasty treatises such as Ouyi Zhixu’s *Edited record of the treatises and commentaries of the Diamond sutra* (*Jingang jing zuanyao kanding ji* 金剛經纂要刊定集), Chinese treatises and annotations on the *Sutra of perfect enlightenment* (*Yuanjue jing* 圓覺經), the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra* and so on. The original Chinese reads: *pi ji bu cun, mao jiang yan fu* 皮既不存, 毛將焉。

²²² The ultimate truth and the conventional truth — Chinese *shisu di* 世俗諦 or *sudi* 俗諦 — constitute the ‘two truths,’ Sanskrit *satyadvaya*. These two truths are said to encompass all *dharma*s of existence. While the ‘conventional truth’ is generally thought to refer to

the truth of the mean (*zhongdi* 中諦).²²³ The ultimate truth is the ‘true’ (*zhen* 真) ‘principle’ (*li* 理)²²⁴ of emptiness of substance and the attainment of all *dharma*s. The true principle of the emptiness of essential nature (*lixing* 理性) which discards the provisional nature of phenomena is called conventional truth. The true principle that emptiness and the provisional nature of things are not two different things, and self-nature and characteristics (*xing-xiang* 性相) are one, is called the truth of the middle or mean. Those who are confused about the principles of these three truths are unenlightened ordinary people. Those who are awakened to these principles of truth are the *buddhas* and the sages. In other words, those who are completely confused about these principles are hence unaware that the three truths are virtues that everyone inherently possesses by nature.²²⁵ Those who are moderately confused are the members of the Two Vehicles,²²⁶ for they are confused about the conventional truth and the truth of the mean, being only awakened to ultimate truth. Those who are only slightly confused are the *bodhisattvas*, for they are

‘objects of ordinary experience that involve misperceptions tainted by ignorance,’ ‘the true or ultimate nature of those objects’ is conveyed by the ‘ultimate truth.’ See Buswell & Lopez (2014: 762).

²²³ The above-listed tripartite division of principal truth can appear in different versions, which paraphrase the ‘ultimate emptiness of reality,’ ‘provisional nature of reality’ and the ‘middle path’ in different ways. Here, it is important to note that *sandi* played an important role in the Chinese Tiantai school of Buddhism as shaped by the patriarch and its de facto founder, Tiantai Zhiyi (538-597).

²²⁴ This is something that we could tentatively call an etymological display of the patterns of meaning in Chinese. What Binzong is trying to show is that the notion of the ‘ultimate truth’ or *di* 諦 is ‘truth’ in its fullest sense in Chinese: it is namely the ‘true’ (*zhen* 真) ‘principle’ (*li* 理) that underlies all existence, the very same semantic pattern which is embodied in the standard Chinese term for truth, namely *zhenli* 真理, or in the semi-classical literary language of the Republican Period, *zhenshi de daoli* 真實的道理.

²²⁵ In this sentence, Binzong uses the key term *xingde* 性德 which denotes ‘virtues possessed by nature,’ while at the same time stressing that the three truths are ‘natural’ or literally ‘such by heaven,’ *tianran* 天然. To put it briefly, he wants to say that the three truths are inherent in ‘self-nature’ (*xing* 性) and the ‘nature’ of existence (*tianran* 天然). The sentence also contains the term *benju* 本具, which is another term emphasizing the ‘innateness’ of the three truths.

²²⁶ It needs to be reiterated that the expression ‘Two Vehicles’ (*ercheng* 二乘) refers to the *śrāvaka* and the *pratyekabuddhas*. By extension, the expression is used to denote the members of the Lesser Vehicle in general.

only confused about the truth of the mean, having already realized the other two truths. On the other hand, we could also say that those who are only slightly awakened are adherents of the Two Vehicles; those who are moderately awakened are the *bodhisattvas*, and those who have attained perfect enlightenment are the *buddhas*. Although ordinary people inherently possess the truths, they are not awakened to their essence. Although the adherents of the Two Vehicles are awakened, they see only ultimate truth. Although the enlightenment of the *bodhisattvas* is deeper, they still have not attained perfection, keeping in front of their eyes only conventional truth. Finally, it is thus only the *buddhas*, whose cognition is completely accomplished and whose awakening embraces everything without exception. Only the *buddhas* have attained perfect realization of the true principle of the mean.

Due to these fundamental differences, the [Vehicles] also differ considerably in their notions (*suojian* 所見) and realization (*suojian* 所證). This is the same principle which is meant by:

[Only] the humane recognize humaneness; and [only] the wise recognize wisdom.²²⁷

Those who, by understanding the nature of suffering and other noble truths, have already extinguished becoming and cessation, have thus recognized the principle of ultimate truth. By so doing, they have realized the enlightenment of unbalanced emptiness (*piankong niepan* 偏空涅槃). Thus are the attainment and the awakening of the Two Vehicles. Those, however, who have gained complete understanding that the real substance of suffering etc. is empty and illusion-like, are able to recognize the principle of conventional truth. By so doing, they have realized the enlightenment of emptiness-only (*danzhong niepan* 但中涅槃). Thus are the realization and the awakening of a *bodhisattva*. Finally, those who have understood that the substance of suffering and so on is in fact true nature (*shixiang* 實相), have recognized the principle of the truth of the mean, realizing complete enlightenment. Thus is the awakening realized by the *buddhas*.

²²⁷ The original reads: *renzhe jian ren, zhizhe jian zhi* 仁者見仁，智者見智.

To put it simply, *di* 諦 covers the two inherently possessed aspects of skillful means (*fāngbiàn* 方便) and ultimate [truth] (*shèngyì* 勝義): thus, for example, when investigating the three realms, one finds that they contain only suffering without true bliss, this principle of truth constitutes its [practical] aspect of skillful means — here, the character *di* 諦 has been used in reference to ‘to investigate.’ This aspect pertains to the Hīnayāna. If, for example, one has thoroughly grasped the principle that suffering and so on, all have true emptiness as their substance, this represents its aspect of ultimate truth — here, the character *di* 諦 has been used in reference to ‘truth.’ This aspect pertains to the Mahāyāna. The *Outline of the tenets of teaching and contemplation* (*Jiaoguan gangzong* 教觀綱宗) [says]:²²⁸

If by understanding suffering, one understands that there is no suffering, and thus attains the ultimate truth, then what about cessation and the path?

Here, we can understand that the original essence of suffering and so on already inherently contains the principle of extinguishing (the *Lotus-sūtra* says that all *dharmas* originally always possess the characteristics of *nirvāṇa*). As for the fact that one can grasp the ultimate truth by ‘understanding suffering’ and seeing ‘that there is no suffering,’ this can be understood as the same thing as the principle that the essential nature of suffering inherently contains the true nature of things. This is also the reason why this *sūtra* says that:

this is the inherent emptiness of all *dharmas*.

Furthermore, the chapter on ‘Analysis of contemplative practice’ in the *Sandhinirmocana-sūtra*²²⁹ says:

²²⁸ An important Tiantai treatise composed by Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1599-1655), a Chinese Buddhist monk who lived during the time of the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties.

²²⁹ This is one of the most important *sūtras*, which serves as the source and foundation for the Yogācāra school. The Sanskrit title can be interpreted to mean ‘Explaining thought’ or ‘Unraveling the bonds.’ The Sanskrit title of the abovementioned chapter of the *sūtra* is ‘*Yogavibhāga*’ (Analysis of *yoga* [contemplative practice]) or in Chinese *fenbie yujia* 分別瑜伽. The Chinese title of this *sūtra* is *Jie shenmi jing* 解深密經, which translates as *The Sūtra explaining the profound mystery*.

There are seven kinds of *thusness* (*tathatā*): the first is the thusness of transmigration ... the seventh is the *thusness* of correct activity.²³⁰ Now, we shall only consider the fourth, fifth, sixth and the seventh kinds of *thusness*. The *sūtra* describes them in the following manner:

- the fourth is posited thusness,²³¹ which denotes the noble truth of suffering;
- the fifth is thusness of mistaken activity,²³² which denotes the noble truth of origination;
- the sixth is thusness of purity, which denotes the noble truth of cessation; and
- the seventh is thusness of correct activity, which denotes the noble truth of the path.

What is meant by thusness is the true nature of things (*shixiang*). According to the above exposition we are able to provide very firm evidence that the essence of the four noble truths is indeed the principle of the innateness of true nature. Since this principle of the mean, which thus captures the true nature of things, is encompassed by the realization attained by the sages of the Mahāyāna, and since the four noble truths (of suffering) fully integrate the principles of the three truths, they are evidently in common with the Dharma-gates of all Three Vehicles²³³ and not exclusively in the domain of the Hīnayāna.

²³⁰ It appears that Binzong uses a synonym or paraphrases the name of the first kind of *thusness*. While in the above text, he speaks about *liuzhuan zhenru* 流轉真如, Xuanzang's translation of the *Samdhinirmocana* speaks about the 'thusness of arising,' *sheng zhenru* 生真如. It is true, however, that *sheng* 生 can also be interpreted as 'arising' in the sense of 'birth,' which is the main constituent of transmigration. According to the aforementioned *sūtra* there are the following seven kinds of *thusness*: (1) thusness of arising, (2) thusness of marks (*xiang* 相), (3) thusness of consciousness, (4) thusness of bases, (5) thusness of mistaken activity, (6) thusness of purity, and (7) thusness of correct activity.

²³¹ Binzong uses *anli zhenru* 安立真如 or 'posited thusness,' while the other Chinese term used in the *Sandhinirmocana* is *yizhi zhenru* 依止真如, which should be translated as the 'thusness of the bases of practice.'

²³² Here, Binzong uses the primary term used in the Xuanzang's translation of the *sūtra*, namely *xiexing zhenru* 邪行真如.

²³³ As already explained in previous footnotes, Binzong regards the Hīnayāna as 'Two Vehicles' and the Mahāyāna as the third.

Therefore, basing itself on the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*, the Tiantai school established four doctrines, which combine and integrate the four kinds of thusness with the four noble truths.²³⁴

(1) The four noble truths as arising and ceasing (*shengmie sisi* 生滅四諦), as pointed out above, this is the Dharma practiced by the Lesser Vehicle, and as such included in the *Tripitaka* teachings (*zangjiao* 藏教).

(2) The four noble truths as unarisen (*wusheng sisi* 無生四諦), when one thoroughly understands that all *dharma*s are like illusions and changing manifestations, that their substance is empty, that by understanding suffering there is no more suffering, one does not suffer because of suffering. When one understands the origination of suffering, there is no origination, so that one is not driven by its arising. When one knows cessation, there is no cessation, and thus that originally there are no life and death. When one knows the path, one knows that there really is no path, consequently severing one's attachments to the manifestations (appearances) of *dharma*s. This is the Dharma commonly practised by all Three Vehicles of Buddhism, which belongs to the shared teachings (*tongjiao* 通教)²³⁵ of Buddhism.

(3) The four truths as immeasurable (*wuliang sisi* 無量四諦, *aparimāṇa*), when we thoroughly understand that suffering appears in immeasurable manifestations and that the entire realm already contains various kinds of suffering. When we understand that origination has immeasurable manifestations, because of which there exist 84,000 mental afflictions; when we understand that cessation has immeasurable manifestations, because of which there exist various kinds of *pāramitā*. When we understand that there exist immeasurable manifestations of the path, which is why there exist

²³⁴ These are the four types of four noble truths as interpreted by the Tiantai patriarch Zhiyi. In Tiantai teaching, they are regarded to be beyond the understanding of the Two Vehicles. In my translation of the four types, I follow Muller's translation of the 'Outline of the Tiantai fourfold teachings' (*Tiantai sijiao yi* 天台四教儀).

²³⁵ Here, the word 'common' means that it is shared by all traditions and schools of Buddhism.

84,000 Dharma-gates. This is the Dharma provisionally cultivated by *bodhisattvas* and thus what is included in the domain of distinct teachings (*biejiao* 別教).

(4) The four noble truths as nonproduced (*wuzuo sidi* 無作四諦), when one thoroughly understands that all *dharma*s contain true nature as their acting substance, that there is no suffering to abandon, that there is no arising of suffering to be eliminated, that there is no path to be practised, and no cessation to be realised, one separates the substance of the true nature of things from all that is produced, therefore calling it the unproduced. This is a unique Dharma, practised by the *bodhisattvas* of the Major Vehicle and thus belongs to the perfect teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教). The *bodhisattva* Guanyin realised these four types of truths on his own. You may observe that the four universal vows (Table 9) are also based on these four types of truths.

*Beings are limitless,
I vow to liberate them all*

The truth of suffering

*Mental afflictions are inexhaustible,
I vow to end them all*

*The truth of accumu-
lation*

*Dharma-gates are innumerable,
I vow to master them all*

The truth of the path

*The path of buddha-hood is unsurpassed,
I vow to attain it*

The truth of cessation

TABLE 9: FOUR UNIVERSAL VOWS

If we carefully study them again, regardless of whether we are speaking about original or later Buddhism, the content of the entire system of Buddhist teaching is in no way separated from the above-listed categories of four noble truths. Therefore, the four noble truths indeed constituted the central idea of Buddhist teaching in the time of Śākyamuni Buddha, while at the same time they later came to represent the fundamental teaching that bound together the Major and Lesser Vehicles. It is only that the Lesser Vehicle represents

exclusively the two truths of suffering and origination, which are able to sever the causal arising of the real world, thus entering into an idealised realm of the causal two truths of cessation and the path.²³⁶ The Major Vehicle, on the other hand, transforms the two truths of suffering and accumulation into the purified truths of cessation and path. In other words, the Lesser Vehicle represents the attainment of *nirvāṇa* by extinguishing birth-and-death, by which one reaches *bodhi* by eliminating afflictions; while the Major Vehicle represents the profound realization that life and death are in fact *nirvāṇa* and that afflictions are *bodhi*. In brief, the difference between the Major and Lesser Vehicles resides fundamentally in their different views on the four noble truths. Based on the abovementioned reasons, it is indeed possible to affirm that the four truths are completely included in the Dharma-gate of the Major Vehicle. So much is beyond doubt. Thus, for example, the Mahāyāna teaching regards the transmigration of life and death as the noble truth of suffering, while at the same time also taking into account attachment to *dharma*s as the noble truth of origination, the six perfections and the four means of conversion²³⁷ as the noble truth of the path, and *nirvāṇa* of no abiding (*wuzhu* 無住) as the noble truth of cessation. This is the Dharma of the four noble truths as practised by the Major Vehicle.

IV. Synthetic explanation: Without the inciting of the ‘suffering’ of life and death, there is also no possibility to extinguish the ‘origination’ of the causes of greed and desire. Hence, there is neither the realisability of the ‘cessation’ of *nirvāṇa*, nor the practicability of the Dharma of the ‘path’ to liberation. Because self-nature is originally already liberated, it is in truth not possible

²³⁶ What Binzong is trying to show here is that the Two Vehicles of the Hīnayāna remain stuck with the notion of causality when it comes to the noble truths of cessation and the path. This feature is further highlighted in the next sentence, which posits that the Mahāyāna, on the contrary, transforms the first two truths and uses them to attain a ‘purer’ notion of the two subsequent truths.

²³⁷ The ‘six perfections’ (*liudu* 六度) are the ‘six *pāramitās*,’ one of which is the *pāramitā* of wisdom. The ‘four means of conversion’ (*sishe* 四攝 or *sishe fa* 四攝法) are the four methods of ‘winning over’ sentient beings, who require saving. They are the four methods employed by *bodhisattvas* in their endeavor to save everyone. The four means include: (1) charitable offerings (*bushi* 佈施, *dāna*), (2) loving words (*aiyu* 愛語, *priyavacana*), (3) beneficial conduct (*lixing* 利行), and (4) fellowship or working together (*tongshi* 同事, *samānārthatā*).

to abandon life-and-death. Because self-nature is originally calm and pure, it is not really possible to cut off afflictions of thought and sight. Because it is originally empty, there is no realisability of *nirvāṇa*. Because it is already perfect, there is no possibility to cultivate the enlightening state of *bodhi*. It is therefore posited that there exist no such things as suffering, origination, cessation, and the path.

This is the conclusion of part F5 on refuting the Dharma of the four noble truths of the *śrāvakas* (here also ends part E2 on eliminating the different Dharma characteristics of the Two Vehicles).

E3 Refuting the Dharma characteristics of the expedient doctrine of a *bodhisattva*

Wu zhi yi wu de

無智亦無得。

There is no wisdom and no attainment

I Analytic explanation: The Dharma-gates practised by a *bodhisattva* are numerous. Considering the aim of this *sūtra*, however, here we shall only speak about the *pāramitās* (perfections). *Zhi* 智 is the wisdom (cognition) of being able to observe, and *de* 得 means realisable principles, that is the inherent emptiness of *dharmas* (*fakong* 法空, *dharmanairātmya*). By meditative reflection on emptiness one can be led to the accomplishment of the realisation of the principle of emptiness of self-nature. By reflecting on the provisional nature of things, one accomplishes the realisation of the principle of the inherent emptiness of all *dharmas*. By reflecting on the mean, one accomplishes the realisation of the principle of emptiness of the concurrent emptiness of self-nature and all *dharmas*. Neither the wisdom of being able to empty all *dharmas*, nor the principle of emptiness of what knowledge can attain, can be attained. This is called losing both the object and the subject (*nengsuo shuangwang* 能所双亡), and obliterating both the objective world and subjective wisdom (*jingzhi jumin* 境智俱泯). This is why it is said that ‘there is no wisdom and no attainment.’

Fazang’s *Commentary on the Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* (*Xinjing shu* 心經疏) reads as follows:

The wisdom of knowing emptiness is unattainable, which is why the *sūtra* says, ‘there is no wisdom’. Because the principle of the emptiness of the object of realisation also cannot be achieved, the *sūtra* says, ‘there is no attainment.’

How is it that the object of contemplating on wisdom, and the principle of realisation, cannot be attained? We only need wisdom and contemplation because of the confusion of all sentient beings. If there were no such confusion, then there would be no need for it. This is the reason the *sūtra* says there is no wisdom. While, at the beginning, the process of becoming aware after being confused seems to involve something that is attainable, in truth self-nature originally possesses no such thing as attainment. This is why the *sūtra* says there is no attainment. Aside from that, the word *zhi* 智 is an abbreviation of *zhahui* 智慧 (wisdom), which refers to *prajñā* within the six perfections (the *wisdom* of carefully observing the inherent emptiness of all *dharmas*). *Prajñā* is the chief of the six perfections, which is described by the principle of ‘gathering the six by raising one,’²³⁸ which has already been interpreted above. Therefore, to negate the first perfection (*prajñā*) is to negate all six perfections. *De* 得 (attaining) refers to the fruit of *buddha*-hood as the object of realisation. The *bodhisattva* cultivates the myriad practices of the six perfections, striving to realise the unsurpassed fruit of *buddha*-hood. Master Deqing’s *A Literal explanation of the Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* (*Xinjing zhishuo* 心經直說) says:

Wisdom (*zhi*) is the ability of the *prajñā* of contemplation, that is the wisdom of the six perfections; attainment (*de*) is the fruit of *buddha*-hood, the object of pursuit. But it seems that both the notions that there is something to attain and the notion of mind pursuing it are both unreal.

These two sentences, namely that ‘there is no wisdom’ and ‘no attainment,’ illuminate that the realisation (attainment) of the practice (wisdom) of a

²³⁸ This expression is probably one of the seminal Chinese notions, formed within Chinese Chan Buddhism. A similar and more frequently encountered expression is *ju yi ming san* 舉一明三, which means ‘clarifying three through raising one.’ Since the Confucian and Daoist textual traditions both abound in similar sayings, it is highly probable that these were also the source for similar such expressions in Chan and other schools of Chinese Buddhism. When it comes to the expression *ju yi gai liu* 舉一賅六 used by Binzong, it means that ‘the six are gathered (*gaishi* 賅攝) in the one,’ where the one is *prajñā* and the six are the six perfections. So that all six perfections are gathered together within the realization of the one, namely *prajñā*.

bodhisattva must leave all appearances (*xiang* 相) and reside in nonabiding (*wuzhu* 無住). In other words, it must not form attachments to the cultivated practices (the six perfections) nor to the grasping of the fruits of realisation (*buddha*-hood). For as soon as there is something a *bodhisattva* would abide in, this represents a form of clinging, which in turn would become an attachment to Dharma. The *Diamond-sūtra* says:

Thus, in leading to *nirvāṇa* immeasurable, countless, and boundless living things, there exist in fact no living beings to have attained *nirvāṇa* ... In relation to Dharmas, a *bodhisattva* must not abide in the practice of *dāna* (generosity)... this is how a *bodhisattva* must be generous, by not abiding in appearances (*xiang* 相).

This excerpt explains nonattachment to the practice of cultivation, clarifying that there is no wisdom to cultivate (wisdom being the exemplar of the six perfections). The *sūtra* also says:

In fact there is no Dharma of the Tathāgata's attainment of the unsurpassed complete and perfect enlightenment. For, *Subhūti*, if there were such an attainment of the Tathāgata of unsurpassed complete perfect enlightenment, then even if *Dīpaṅkara* Buddha gave no such prediction about [such *dharma*], you would be able to become a *buddha* in your next life!

This elucidates nonclinging to the fruits as objects of realisation — nonattainment. Once a *bodhisattva* harbours the idea of cultivating realisation, they are clinging to the idea of actions of cultivation, which is why the *Diamond-sūtra* points out that:

If a *bodhisattva* were to maintain concepts of self (*woxiang* 我相), others (*renxiang* 人相), sentient beings (*zhongsheng xiang* 眾生相), lifespan (*shouzhe xiang* 壽者相), then they would not be a *bodhisattva* ... If such were a *bodhisattva*, then the idea of self-nature would constitute the dignified Buddha land (*buddhakṣetra*). This means that such a person would not merit being called a *bodhisattva*.

The above excerpt from the *sūtra* can serve as a warning, a ‘hit with a stick,’²³⁹ for those who practise the teaching by forming attachments to ideas.

Despite that one may be able to clearly see the principle of the inherent emptiness of all *dharma*s, if one still stubbornly maintains an ‘idea of wisdom’ as something that can be observed, or the ‘idea of emptiness’ as something that can be attained, then the subject and object become separated, which would still be a form of clinging to *dharma*s. For this reason a *bodhisattva* will not actually cling to the subtle meaning of the *prajñā* of genuine emptiness, for even such *dharma*s also need to be regarded as empty. As for a *bodhisattva*’s all-encompassing cultivation of the myriad practices of the six perfections, their upward striving for *buddha*-hood and downward endeavour of changing all living beings, must also be divided into two separate stages:

- (1) The provisional teaching of a *bodhisattva* consists of carrying out the deeds of the six perfections, engaging in the cultivation of practices in accordance with concepts (*xiang*), while in all respects retaining the concepts of practices to be carried out — the six perfections, together with its realisable fruits, that is the fruits of *buddha*-hood.
- (2) However, the true teaching of a *bodhisattva* is not as pointed out under this first point. Instead, it is maintaining the six perfections, while concurrently giving rise to all perfections in a single perfection and regarding all undertakings as the nonsubstantiality of the three aspects of giving (*sanlun ti kong* 三輪體空).²⁴⁰ Thus, when they carry out acts of *dāna* (giving), they do not cling to self as the giver, nor the other as receiver, nor do they form attachments to the gifts and their retributive [*karmic*] results. The remaining five perfections all follow suit. As for the aspect of the fruits of realisation, the case

²³⁹ This refers to a well-known Chan Buddhist practice of hitting novice disciples with thin sticks to bring about instant enlightenment. Binzong speaks about *dangtou yibang* 當頭一棒, which refers to the mentioned Chan practice, referred to as *banghe* 棒喝.

²⁴⁰ This principle means that in the *bodhisattva*’s practice of the method of charity, the donor, receiver, and the donation are all empty of self-nature.

is the same. We can thus speak about perfection without the concept of perfection, and realisation without the concept of realisation. This is the state (*jingjie* 境界) of practice and realisation of a Mahāyāna *bodhisattva* — there is no wisdom and no attainment. Being erudite in the gate of the real nature of things:

bodhi and mental afflictions are all equal to empty sky flowers (*konghua* 空華).

There essentially exist no mental afflictions one can get rid of — there is no wisdom, and there essentially exists no enlightenment (*bodhi*) to be realised — there is no attainment. Although this is the case, only the wisdom of nonwisdom is true wisdom and only the attainment of nonattainment is true attainment.

To practise all good *dharma*s by means of nonself, non-other, no sentient beings, and no lifespan, is to attain unsurpassed complete perfect enlightenment ... Subhūti, when I was in the state of unsurpassed complete perfect enlightenment, there was not even the tiniest *dharma* I could attain, for this is called unsurpassed complete perfect enlightenment (*Diamond-sūtra*).

Nonattainment and nonrealisation are the realisation of the *Buddhadharmakāya* (Dharma-body) (*Great perfection of wisdom-sūtra*).

That there is nothing to attain is the nature (*xiang*) of the perfection of wisdom, that there is nothing to attain is unsurpassed complete perfect enlightenment (*Great perfection of wisdom-sūtra*).

This is an example of nonwisdom being the true wisdom, and nonattainment being the true attainment.

This *sūtra*, however, only says ‘there is no wisdom and no attainment,’ a statement which relates to the inherent emptiness of *dharma*s. In fact, we need to go one level further and say that there is no nonwisdom and there is also no nonattainment — which implies the same as saying that there is no

ignorance and no ending of ignorance — in order to reveal the subtle principle of the true nature of the middle path. In this sense, even the ‘nonexistence’ of nonwisdom and nonattainment must be regarded as nonexistent (*wu*),²⁴¹ so that what we are speaking about *is* in fact wisdom and attainment. This is the principle of the emptiness of both self-nature and *dharmas*. Which is thus the agreement of *prajñā* with unsurpassed emptiness. But since, the above text on the dispelling of clinging mentions three notions (the notion of self, the notion of *dharma*, and the notion of non-*dharma*), which must all be destroyed at the same time, it is perhaps that this *sūtra* contains a simple account [of this reasoning]. We shall now consult the part of the *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* on the destruction of all notions (*xiang* 相):

Cessation and sense object are realised together, therefore the truth is advanced like the luminous nature of wondrous awakening (self-enlightenment), while the Tathāgata harbours the inherently wondrous perfect mind, which is neither emptiness, nor earth, water, air nor fire (this is the emptiness of the five aggregates), it is not eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or consciousness, it is not material form, sound, smell, flavour, touch or *dharma*; it is neither the realm of visual consciousness, nor even the realm of thought consciousness (this is the emptiness of the twelve entrances, down to the eighteen elements, that is emptiness of all this-worldly *dharmas* as summarised above). It is neither understanding nor ignorance, yet it is still understanding, that is the ending of ignorance, down to neither old age and death, nor ending old age and death (this is the emptiness of the twelve *nidāna*); it is also neither wisdom nor attainment (this is the emptiness of the *dharma* of the provisional teaching of a *bodhisattva*, the *dharma* of emptiness transcending the world as summarised above).

The *sūtra* further says:

It is both mind and emptiness, it is the earth, water, air, and water; it is eyes, it is ears, nose, tongue, body, and consciousness; it is materiality, sound, smell, flavour, touch, and *dharma*; it is the realm of visual consciousness, down to the border realm of thought consciousness (this is the dual affirmation of this-worldly *dharmas*);

²⁴¹ Binzong speaks about negation of negation as affirmation.

it is understanding, as well as ignorance, down to old age and death, and the ending of old age and death; it is suffering, it is origination, it is cessation, it is the path, it is wisdom and attainment (this is the dual affirmation of the dharma of transcending this world).

The two texts differ slightly from each other. While the present one speaks about everything in terms of nonexistence (*wu* 無), the latter only uses the negation ‘non-’ (*fei* 非); if the present text only speaks about ‘separation’ (*li* 離, that is, nonexistence) and does not explain ‘illumination’ (*zhao* 照; that is, being), the other describes both separation and illumination. Although this text is concise, the two principles are mutually revealing. It is my sincere hope that the learner will pay much attention to it.

Above, we have given an initial explanation of how the aggregates, objects, and border realms belong to the domain of ordinary feelings and desires, while having subsequently also explained how the four noble truths, the twelve *nidāna*, and nonwisdom and nonattainment all belong to the realm of sagely existence. But, when it comes to the nature of emptiness, observed within it, all of them are nonexistent, that is the principle of concurrently losing both the notion of defilement and purity, the ending of both the sentiments and desires of ordinary and sagely beings. Hence, there is no need to speak about the illusory nature of appearances of the aggregates and so on. As far as the twelve *nidāna*, the four noble truths, and the *bodhisattva*’s practice of wisdom and attainment are concerned, these are nothing else than good remedies for treating certain diseases. But when a disease is cured, we also get rid of the medicine. This is identical to the meaning of “One needs a raft to cross a river, but once on the other side, the raft is discarded.” Similarly, what we use in the process of cultivation and practice serves as a means showing us the way, which however has nothing at all to do with the original substance of the notion of emptiness. Thus, if we cling to such means and refuse to let it go, we will consequently contract a certain illness. The *Diamond-sūtra* says:

Akin to a raft, we still have to discard the Dharma, to say nothing about non-Dharma.

This assertion is made in exactly the same regard.

Here, we need to take note though. For, when we usually speak about *zhi* 智 (wisdom/cognition), what we mean by it is the wisdom of the emptiness of knowing (clearly seeing that all aggregates are empty), and about *de* 得 (attainment) as the attained principle of its emptiness. But, at the same time, we do not give rise to the wisdom of emptiness nor the understanding of the emptiness of others and self, for if you were to, you would eventually create the Dharma of the *śrāvaka*.

Generally speaking, we could thus assert that, emptying the ‘five aggregates’ means destroying the Dharma of ordinary beings; emptying the ‘four truths’ and the ‘twelve *nidāna*’ is destroying the Dharma of the Two Vehicles; and emptying ‘wisdom and attainment’ is destroying the Dharma of *bodhisattvas*. The wisdom of emptying the five aggregates is the ‘wisdom of the emptiness of a [permanent] human self,’ while of the principle what is attained is the ‘principle of the emptiness of a [permanent] human self.’ These are the results of the practice and attainment of members of the Two Vehicles. The wisdom of emptying the four noble truths is the ‘wisdom of the emptiness of Dharma,’ while the attained principle is the ‘principle of the emptiness of Dharma.’ These are the results of the practice and realisation of a *bodhisattva*. The wisdom of emptying wisdom and attainment (nonwisdom and nonattainment) is the ‘wisdom of double emptiness,’ while the principle attained is ‘the principle of double emptiness.’ These are the results of the practice and realisation of a *buddha*. What can be known for sure is that ‘wisdom and attainment’ as an object of the present explanations is that ‘wisdom’ refers to the wisdom of the emptiness of *dharmas*, while its principle is the principle of the emptiness of *dharmas*. On the other hand, the wisdom of ‘nonwisdom,’ refers to the wisdom of double emptiness, while the attainment of ‘nonattainment’ refers to the principle of double emptiness. This is noteworthy. Because the purport of this *sūtra* is not only to render empty the *dharmas* of the Hīnayāna *śrāvaka*, but even to render empty all remaining *dharmas* like that of the Mahāyāna *bodhisattva*, not leaving out the [notion of] unsurpassed emptiness.

II Synthetic explanation: Within the inherently empty nature of all *dharmas*, not even one *dharma* can be established. As a consequence of which there are no aggregates, entrances, objects, or border realms that would be the

product of the dependent arising of ordinary beings, nor the four truths, the twelve *nidāna* of the Dharmas of the Two Vehicles; that is the *wisdom* of the subject of contemplation as practised by a *bodhisattva*, as well as the principle of emptiness of the Dharma realised by means of wisdom from contemplation — attainment, all are to be included within it. This is why the *sūtra* says that there is no wisdom and no attainment.

Here ends part E3 on refuting the Dharma-characteristics of the expedient doctrine of a *bodhisattva*.

D8 The duality of the fruits of realisation

E4 Understanding a *bodhisattva*'s attainment of the fruit of the elimination [of afflictions]

E5 Understanding the Buddha's attainment of the fruit of wisdom

E4 Understanding a *bodhisattva*'s attainment of the fruit of the elimination [of afflictions]

Yi wu suo de gu, putisaduo, yi bore boluomiduo gu, xin wu guaai, wu guaai gu, wu you kongbu, yuan li diandao mengxiang, yiujing niepan.

以無所得故，菩提薩埵，依般若波羅密多故，心無罣礙，無罣礙故，無有恐怖，遠離顛倒夢想，究竟涅槃。

Because there is nothing to attain, *bodhisattvas* rely on the practice of the perfection of wisdom, so that their minds are unimpeded. Because they are unimpeded, they know no anxiety, they keep far away from confusion (inverted beliefs) and dreamlike illusion, and in the end attain complete enlightenment.

This *sūtra* places emphasis on the three characters *wu suo de* 無所得 (there is nothing to attain), which is a point students of this text ought to be particularly mindful about.

Also the words 'there is nothing to attain' must not be regarded as meaning the same as *wu de* 無得 in 'there is no wisdom and no attainment.' Because in the preceding parts, the characters *wu de* (no attainment) are meant as breaking a *bodhisattva*'s clinging to the Dharma, as already pointed out above. However, the characters *wu suo de* are meant as a conclusion to the entire long preceding text saying:

Therefore, the core of emptiness is formlessness ... there is no wisdom and no attainment.

It can also be said that it represents a crystalised expression conveying a summarised explanation that *prajñā* is after all empty. This ought not to be overlooked.

I Analytic explanation: the words that there is nothing to attain form a bridge linking the earlier and later parts of the *sutra*, they set up a continuity between the preceding statements,

Therefore, the core of emptiness is formlessness ... there is no wisdom and no attainment

and the subsequent part saying that,

bodhisattvas rely on the practice of perfection of wisdom ... complete enlightenment.

Here the character *yi* 以 means ‘because’, and *wu suode* 無所得 means that there exists not even one *dharma* that can be attained. The character *gu* 故 can be regarded as relating to either the preceding or the following text. If it is linked to the preceding text, then it ought to be explained as ‘cause’ (in this case the entire sentence reads as *yi wu suo de gu* 以無所得故. But if it is linked to the subsequent sentence, then it must be explained as ‘therefore’ (in this case, the sentence reads *gu putisaduo* 故菩提薩埵). This causes the two sentences to be explained in the following two different ways:

- (1) As the substance of true nature: how could it be said in the preceding text that,

therefore, the core of emptiness is formlessness ... there is no wisdom and no attainment?

Because (*yi* 以) the genuinely empty true nature of things is in its substance pure and empty on its own, and there ‘exists no possibility to attain’ all *dharma*s such as the five aggregates and so on, therefore it is said,

because there is nothing to attain (*yi wu suo de gu* 以無所得故).

The Sixth Patriarch said:

subtle self-nature is originally empty, so that there are no *dharma*s to attain.

This is an interpretation the meaning of which is connected to the preceding text. In this case, the sentence ‘there is nothing to attain’ ought to be read in connection to the preceding text.

- (2) As the merits of *prajñā*: ‘because’ *prajñā* is capable of destroying all afflictions and rooting out all illusory appearances — ‘there exists no’ single *dharma* that ‘can be attained’; because of the wonder of its supreme merits, *bodhisattvas* rely on it (*prajñā*), so that nothing impedes their minds and they can attain ultimate *nirvāṇa* (if they were to cling to various kinds of attainable *dharma*s, they would not be able to attain the state of unimpeded mind). Moreover, the *buddhas* of the three times all rely on it to realise the highest form of *bodhi*; for if they were to form attachments to attainable *dharma*s, they would also be unable to realise the unsurpassed fruits of *buddha*-hood. This is an interpretation which corresponds with the subsequent text of the *sūtra*. In this case, the sentence ‘there is nothing to attain’ ought to be read in connection to the subsequent text.

Apart from that, we can also interpret these words with the help of the three meanings of ‘subject of attainment’ (*neng de* 能得),²⁴² ‘object of attainment’ (*suo de* 所得),²⁴³ and ‘innate possession’ (*benju* 本具):

- (1) If we speak about relying on the supreme wisdom of *prajñā* to realise that all *dharma*s are empty, then what is there to be attained? It is therefore said that there is nothing to be attained. This is speaking from the perspective of ‘object of attainment.’
- (2) If we say that self-nature is originally perfect and flawless (*buque* 不缺),²⁴⁴ then there is nothing at all we need to attain. It is therefore

²⁴² Literally, ‘the ability to attain’ or ‘who is able to attain.’

²⁴³ Literally, ‘what is attained.’

²⁴⁴ The term *buque* 不缺 can be found in the Chinese version of the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* (*Yujia shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論). It can have different meanings, depending on the context, ranging from ‘not failing,’ ‘flawless’ to ‘uninterrupted.’ If the term ought to be interpreted in the last sense, then *buque* would refer to the self-nature as ‘ever wholesome and complete.’

said that there is nothing to be attained. This is speaking from the perspective of the ‘subject of attainment.’

- (3) Since it is said that true nature itself already contains all virtues and wisdom, while ordinary people are confused and do not see and know, the *bodhisattva* now relies on practising the profound perfection of wisdom to clearly see the nature of things — all required virtues are already readily available, it is not that these have previously not been given and now suddenly appeared, while it is even less true that they came from outside; because they were inherently given, it is not true that there exists something to attain, which is why it is said that nothing can be attained. This is so, if we speak from the perspective of the inherent possession of virtues and wisdom.

Because all *dharmas* exist because of false emotions and illusory clinging, if an ordinary person forms attachment to the five aggregates, as a consequence there will also be a world of body and mind that could be attained. Because the adherents of the Two Vehicles cling to the notion of emptiness, therefore, there also exists the *nirvāṇa* of unbalanced emptiness, which can thus be attained. Because the provisional doctrine of a *bodhisattva* forms attachment to the two extremes, therefore, there exists the upward pursuit and downward changing, and the clear differentiation between subject and object. In conclusion, that there is nothing to be attained is to be without attachment (without the grasping of desire and strong attachment), for if there were something to attain, this would imply that attachment and grasping exist. Once one has delusional views of greed-induced grasping, the mental afflictions of the three delusions start burning. *The Subtle meaning of Guanyin* (*Guanyin xuanyi* 觀音玄義) says:

Seeing and thinking grasps the appearances of life and death, the secular world grasps the notion of *nirvāṇa*, and ignorance grasps the idea of the two extremes.

If we now use the *prajñā* of contemplation to perceive it, then absurd feelings are immediately eliminated, and attachments completely dispelled. This is the extinguishing of the emotions of both ordinary people and sages, a complete eradication of the calculating intellect. In this case, is there still

anything like the three delusions? Are there still any *dharmas* one can set out to attain? The *sūtra* says:

Thus, the perfection of wisdom makes emptiness its characteristic (*xiang* 相), it takes unattachment as its characteristic, it takes nonabiding as its characteristic. How so? In the profound nature of the perfection of wisdom all *dharmas* and all characteristics are unattainable, for nothing really exists (*wu suoyou* 無所有).

Question: since it was said that there is not even one *dharma* that can be attained, why is it then that the following part of the text also states that by relying on the wisdom of *prajñā* one can attain perfect *nirvāṇa* and even the fruits of *buddha*-hood? Allow me to answer this by giving the following quotation:

Sudṛṣa said: World Honoured One, if attainment is not possible, then how can we speak about the time when a *bodhisattva mahāsattva* practises the profound perfection of wisdom? Without attainment of all *dharmas*, how can we speak about the possibility of accomplishing the six perfections, entering the divine nature of a *bodhisattva*, about the majestic and pure *buddha*-land, or accomplishments of sentient beings?

The Buddha replied: A *bodhisattva mahāsattva* does not practise the profound perfection of wisdom because of all *dharmas*, but practises the profound perfection of wisdom because there is nothing to attain. (*The Great perfection of wisdom-sūtra*)

If there is something to be attained, then the mind gives rise to clinging and is drawn into it. If there is nothing to attain, then the mind itself is empty and liberated (the ultimate enlightenment of a *bodhisattva* is obtained because of their mind of nonattainment). This can be compared to a group of people of false reputation, which is not established with respect to skill and learning (not emphasising skill and learning is a metaphor for not understanding the meaning of emptiness, good reputation is a metaphor for falsely arisen clinging), it is not only that they are unable to attain any acclaim but on the contrary incur ridicule (a metaphor for the troubles entailed by clinging and attachments). As for those, who pay no importance to fame and hide their own talents (a metaphor for having nothing to attain), they can, on the contrary, garner an extensive and well-known reputation, which can last for

all eternity (a metaphor for attaining great liberation). We can thus know that if there is something to attain, then there is nothing to attain, and that there is nothing to attain is the true attainment. The *Diamond-sūtra* says:

Everything that has attributes (*xiang* 相) is illusory (if something is attainable, then nothing is attainable), but if one sees that all appearances (*xiang* 相) are nonappearances (because there is nothing to attain), one then sees the Tathāgata (that is the true attainment).

The Chan Master Duanji also remarked that:

Not attaining even one *dharmā* is called mental transmission, having nothing to attain is called taking the seat of enlightenment (*daochang* 道場).

All this explains the principle that having nothing to attain is the true attainment. At the same time, we must also know that ‘emptiness of self-nature’ does not hinder ‘existence by dependent origination,’ its establishment therefore does not hinder causality. On the other hand ‘emptiness of self-nature’ does not obstruct dependent coming into being, as a consequence of which there is no attachment to myriad *dharmas*. Being able to speak of existence without clinging to various appearances/attributes (*xiang*), being able to discuss emptiness without discarding all *dharmas*. It is in this point that the subtleness of the *prajñā* of true emptiness truly resides. For this reason, the following text says, to attain the perfect *nirvāṇa* the *bodhisattva* relies on *prajñā*.

That the term *bodhisattva* (*putisaduo*) is abbreviated as *pusa* 菩薩 has been explained above.

Yi bore boluomiduo gu 依般若波羅密多故 means that relying on this wisdom of the ultimate emptiness, a *bodhisattva* attains the mind without impediments and even final complete *nirvāṇa*.

Guaai 罣礙 (obscuration, impediment), *gua* 罣 means to cover with a net (a metaphor for the affliction of ignorance covering the true mind, like a fish trapped by a fishing net, which cannot swim freely). *Ai* 礙 means ‘to obstruct’: it refers to how beings’ clinging hinders the right path, making it impossible for them to advance. What the term means is that the true mind is concealed

by ignorance, and therefore deluded by everything into clinging (*gua* 罣), blocking all objects, so that, when one makes contact with the path, one becomes sluggish (*ai* 礙). The word is therefore about *gua'ai* 罣礙 (impediment). That is to say, this term denotes being entangled in, and impeded by things and thus unable to become free.

But what exactly is our mind entangled and impeded by? Ordinary people are entangled by materiality, which is why they have the impediments of self-clinging. The followers of the Two Vehicles are entangled by emptiness, the expedient teaching of a *bodhisattva* is entangled by the two extremes, which is why they are subjected to the impediments of clinging to *dharmas*.

Kongbu 恐怖 (anxiety), *kong* 恐 is fear, and *bu* 怖 is dread. Being terrified for a certain period of time is called *kong* 恐, and suffering from permanent fear is called *bu* 怖. In brief, when one is troubled by something and gives rise to fear and dread, one's mind cannot be pacified. But what exactly is this anxiety? Because ordinary people are impeded by the five aggregates, they have fear pertaining to separation from life and death, because the followers of the Two Vehicles are impeded by the unbalanced [notion of] emptiness, they fear the transformation and changes of life and death.

Speaking only from the perspective of ordinary people, because of their unawareness, on the inside they cling to their bodies—which are provisional combinations of the four elements—as themselves. Being reluctant to give up their attachments, they thus turn their physical bodies into impediments, which then give birth to various fears of old age, illness, death, and so on. On the outside, however, they cling to the myriad *dharmas* as true existence. By deludedly clinging, they then make the myriad *dharmas* their impediments, giving rise to various kinds of anxieties, such as fearing personal gain and loss. This all is being without the wisdom of *prajñā* and being confused about the principles of the true nature of things, always engaging in all issues with a mind of delusion, with a mind of affliction, as a consequence of which they have various kinds of impediments and anxieties. A *bodhisattva* however, relies on the wisdom of *prajñā*, engaging in everything using the true mind, with the mind of purity and calmness, as a

consequence of which their mind is devoid of all impediments and thus also without anxieties.

If I want to be able to practice relying on *prajñā*, then by the time I am able to carry out meritorious deeds, my mind is one with external objects, and it will be liberated and at ease — on the inside I do not cling to body and mind, which is why I am not impeded by body and mind; on the outside I do not cling to the myriad *dharmas*, and am thus not impeded by the myriad *dharmas*. Hence, all of these, old age, illness, and death, together with the anxiety of everything impermanent and changing, all naturally become nonexistent (strong attachments are delusions, impediments are karmic deeds, anxieties are suffering, which makes these three delusions, *karma*, and suffering). Owing to being without clinging (delusions), one then has no impediments (karmic deeds); since one is without impediments, one also has no anxieties (suffering). The *sūtra* therefore says that the mind is without impediments and as such also without anxieties.

Yuanli diandao mengxiang 遠離顛倒夢想, the two characters *yuanli* 遠離 must be read with the falling tone, and explained with the word ‘to go away’ (*qu* 去). It can also be pointed out that *yuan* 遠 is forever, expressing ‘not temporary.’ *Li* 離 is breaking away, that is to liberate oneself. Combined, the word thus means eternal liberation. The *Great perfection of wisdom-sūtra* speaks about:

the characteristics (*xiang*) of the profound perfection of wisdom of liberation.

It also says:

Attaining [eternal] liberation from all affliction, from the six destinies, the four births, aggregates, realms, places and so on, is therefore called the perfection of wisdom.

Diandao 顛倒 (cognitive distortions), *dian* 顛 is the head going upside down, and *dao* 倒 is to invert. As a person’s head is originally upwards (facing towards the sky) and the feet are originally down (standing on the ground), if this is now turned upside down and turned into disorder, making the head suspended towards the ground and one’s feet looking skyward, this is what

is called *diandao* (turning upside down). This is a form of metaphor, which means that all living beings turn with their backs toward awareness and are in contact with the sense objects, which is why they regard what is false as true. For this reason, we call this ‘turned upside down’ (confused). The *Sūtra of perfect enlightenment* says:

After all, living beings come from nonexistence, the various kinds of distortions (*diandao*) are like confusions to humans, in which the four sides change places (east becomes west, south becomes north).

Generally speaking, in the world there exist four cognitive distortions (*sidao* 四倒 or *si diandao* 四顛倒). What exactly are these?

- (1) Mistakenly regarding the impermanent *dharma* of birth, and cessation of all actions in this world, as permanent is the distorted view of the impermanent as permanent.
- (2) Mistakenly regarding all suffering in this world as joy, is the distorted view of suffering as pleasure.
- (3) Mistakenly regarding all *dharma*s in this world as self and failing to understand that all are without self, is the distorted view of nonself as self.
- (4) Mistakenly regarding all impure *dharma*s of this world as pure, is the distorted view of the defiled as the pure.

This is what is called mistakenly regarding the body of flesh as pure, what the world enjoys as pleasure, the objective images of the mind as permanent, and dependently arisen *dharma*s as one’s self (see further the *Discourse on the repository of Abhidharma discussions* 19 (*Jushe lun* 俱舍論) and the *Treatise on the perfection of great wisdom* (*Da lun* 大論) 31).

We must know that unborn and unceasing, and eternally unchanging is called permanent. Eternally residing in the peace of *nirvāṇa* and being forever liberated from all suffering is called bliss (consolation).²⁴⁵ Being at ease and liberated, being truly unimpeded is called ‘own-self’ (*wo* 我).²⁴⁶ Being

²⁴⁵ *Le* 樂, here, it would probably be more precise to speak about some sort of ‘consolation’ as the gradual ‘emptying’ of all suffering.

²⁴⁶ Although Buddhism does not recognize the existence of a ‘self’ as a true entity, speaking generally about self-nature, in the Chinese intellectual context there indeed is such a

eternally liberated from all material defilements is called undefiled. Is there purity in the bodies of ordinary people composed of flesh and blood? Where is there pleasure in different kinds of pain and scorching suffered by the masses? Where is there permanence in the deluded mind of arising and ceasing within a twinkling of an eye? Where is there an own-self (*wo* 我) within dependently arisen *dharmas*? These four inverted beliefs constitute delusional view, which confuses the true mind of ordinary beings.

When the Buddha was approaching *nirvāṇa*, he spoke to his devoted disciples who stood guard by his side, saying: after I have entered *nirvāṇa*, you ought to reside (*zhu* 住) within the four bases of mindfulness²⁴⁷ (to reside means not to depart from, indicating that one should constantly not leave the four bases of mindfulness). The four bases of mindfulness are as follows:

- (1) contemplation on the impurities of the body (*guan shen bujing* 觀身不淨), which can be used to remedy the distorted view of purity;
- (2) contemplation on the painfulness of feelings (*guan shou shi ku* 觀受是苦), which can remedy the distorted view of pleasure;
- (3) contemplation on the impermanence of the mind (*guan xin wuchang* 觀心無常), which can remedy the distorted view of permanence; and
- (4) contemplation on *dharmas* as devoid of self-existence (*guan fa wuwo* 觀法無我), which can remedy the distorted belief of own-self (*wo*).

notion. Above, Binzhong uses the word *wo* 我, which can be translated as ‘me,’ ‘self,’ ‘myself’ or even ‘own-self.’

²⁴⁷ Interestingly, Binzhong mentions the term *si nianchu* 四念處, which is the translation used before Xuanzang’s time. Following Xuanzang’s translations, the term *si nianzhu* 四念住 was used. The probable reason is that Binzhong had to use the older term connected to the fact that he wanted to emphasize the duty ‘to reside’ (*zhu* 住) ‘within’ fourfold mindfulness. According to the teaching, the four kinds of mindfulness ought to be practiced after one has tranquilized one’s mind. They include: (1) contemplation on the defilement of the body (*shennian zhu* 身念住), (2) contemplation on feeling as painful (*shounian zhu* 受念住), (3) contemplation on the impermanence of the mind (*xinnian zhu* 心念住), and (4) contemplating *dharmas* as devoid of inherent existence (*fanian zhu* 法念住).

This is very much worth paying attention to.

Mengxiang 夢想 means fantasies which arise in dreams.²⁴⁸ It is a kind of illusory and unreal being (while daytime thoughts still belong to the illusory, then how much more so do the dreams of the night). The *Essays by the bamboo window* (*Zhuchuang suibi* 竹窗隨筆) says:

Because dreams (*meng* 夢) are made of thoughts (*xiang* 想), they are called *mengxiang*.

The term *mengxiang* could perhaps also be translated as ‘deluded thoughts’ (*wangxiang* 妄想). If the character *wang* 妄 (delusion, fantasy) is the literal meaning, *meng* 夢 is a metaphor. The *Treatise on the perfection of great wisdom* says:

If in dreams the unreal is called real, when one become awakened, one already knows that, and laughs at oneself in retrospect.

When all sentient beings are deluded (dreaming), they absurdly believe the myriad *dharma*s to be really existing. But only when one has finally attained enlightenment (being awake), is one able to understand that the myriad *dharma*s are illusory and unreal. At that time, one also looks back in time and laughs at one’s past delusions. The phantom situations that appear in a dream are just that, after one has awakened things are completely different. In brief, when ordinary beings regard delusions as truth, this is called a conceptual distortion (*diandao*). When the dreamer wrongly regards the dreamland to be real, this is also a distorted view. Therefore, the *sūtra* speaks about distorted views and dreamlike illusions.

The entire dreamland²⁴⁹ represents a phantom manifestation of dreams and as is such completely nonfactual. On the other hand, a person immersed in a dream regards it to be true, until they awaken, and the entire spectacle suddenly becomes empty. Only then does one realise that everything has been a dream. The physical and mental world manifested before my eyes are all conjured up by the deluded thoughts of ignorance (ignorance is a simile

²⁴⁸ In standard Chinese the term *mengxiang* 夢想 means simply ‘dreams.’

²⁴⁹ Binzong speaks about the world of dreams, which we experience during our sleep.

for dreams, the physical and mental world is a simile for the dreamland), so that it is entirely unreal. Because they are deluded, they falsely regard delusions as real, giving rise to various kinds of inverted beliefs and attachments. How are these kinds of inverted beliefs different from the delusions in our dreams? A line of a *sūtra* reads as follows:

When one observes this world, it appears like in a dream.

A common saying is: “Human life is like a dream.” It must be borne in mind, however, that the dreams dreamt at night-time are small dreams, while dreams dreamt during an entire lifetime are big. The notion of ‘deluded thoughts’ referred also to the beginningless aeons of ignorance and inverted beliefs of the self, which are after all fabricated, and unreal like dreams. Ordinary people are without awareness (without *prajñā*). Their lack of awareness causes them to cling to distorted views (delusion), falsely create bad *karma* and deludedly experience life and death (suffering). If those are now reflected upon with *prajñā*, then ignorance and delusions are dispelled, and the false appearances become empty. Then, true mind becomes completely revealed and the true nature of the thing is revealed, like awakening out of a dream. If we seek for objects which we have seen in the dream, we are unable to obtain (*de* 得) them. This is the meaning of separating oneself from confusions (distorted views) and dreamlike illusions.

Prajñā is understanding ultimate emptiness. Since *bodhisattvas* practising the profound perfection of *prajñā* can clearly see that all *dharmas* are empty of self-nature, they will naturally not give rise to distorted views and clinging to the various kinds of delusion. It is therefore said of these *bodhisattvas* that they ‘keep far away from confusions (distorted views) and dreamlike illusions.’ These distorted views and dreamlike illusions constitute the karmic causes of life and death, and because in the case of *bodhisattvas* these karmic causes are gone, life and death both end on their own. Freeing oneself from life and death constitutes the state of residing in *nirvāṇa*, which is why one of the subsequent sentences in the *sūtra* mentions ‘complete enlightenment.’

Niepan 涅槃 (*nirvāṇa*), we must first give an introduction to the various kinds of *nirvāṇa*. It is divided into two kinds: *nirvāṇa* with remainder (*yōyu* 有餘, *sopadhiśeṣa*) and *nirvāṇa* without remainder (*wuyu* 無餘, *niravaśeṣa*).

We must give a detailed explanation of how these are divided into three stages.

- (1) From the standpoint of the Lesser Vehicle: when a person realises and attains the fruits of an *arhat*, although the deluded views and thoughts (Endnote No. 4) which incur the karmic causes of suffering in life and death have been completely eliminated and have stopped arising, at this stage, one still has remaining the bodily fruits of retribution of life and death incurred by former karmic deeds, which have not yet been eliminated (the substance of life still seems to be preserved). This is called *nirvāṇa* with remainder (when there still remain defilements of the self-based fruits of suffering of life and death that need to be eliminated). Now, if even the body arisen based on the self of former karmic affliction is also eliminated, so that one is no more experiencing the suffering of life and death following *karma*, this is called *nirvāṇa* without remainder — because there is no remainder of the external fruits of suffering of life and death that can be eliminated. In other words, when one has not only already been liberated from mental affliction and karmic confusion which bring about the very roots of life and death, but has also been liberated from the physiologically real substance of life accumulated by means of various sufferings, then this constitutes *nirvāṇa* without remainder. These are the Hīnayāna notions of *nirvāṇa* with remainder and *nirvāṇa* without remainder. Here, the states with and without remainder are of the same substance, because the elimination of the delusions of sight and thought remains the same, it is the same as realising truth. The only point of difference is in the self-based cessation of defilements, without yet having eliminated the levels above.
- (2) From the standpoint of the Major Vehicle: if the causes of the changes of life and death are eliminated this constitutes *nirvāṇa* with remainder, if, however, one has exhausted the results of change, this constitutes *nirvāṇa* without remainder. These are *nirvāṇas* with and without remainder in the Major Vehicle.

- (3) Speaking from the perspective of Lesser Vehicle in opposition to the Major Vehicle: *nirvāṇa* realised by the Lesser Vehicles is ‘with remainder,’ because it only manages to eliminate the afflictions of seeing and thinking, which only represents a cessation of a segment of life and death (delimited *samsāra*). Thus, there still ‘exist’ its ‘remaining’ particles of the secular world and afflictions of ignorance have not yet been eliminated, so that the transfiguration of life and death (*samsāra*) has not yet been finished. This kind of *nirvāṇa* is therefore called ‘with remainder.’ As for *nirvāṇa* realised by the Major Vehicle, this then constitutes *nirvāṇa* ‘without remainder,’ because it has eliminated the three delusions, while the two kinds of life and death have been eliminated forever. Moreover, there ‘exist no remaining’ mental afflictions that can be annihilated, so that the cycle of life and death can be finished. It is therefore called *nirvāṇa* ‘without remainder.’ These are *nirvāṇa* with and without remainder as perceived from the opposition between Major and Lesser Vehicles.

Regarding the boundary between the *nirvāṇas*²⁵⁰ of the Major and Lesser Vehicles, this can further be explained through three points:

- (1) The Lesser Vehicle realises *nirvāṇa* by eliminating life and death, while the Major Vehicle completely understands that life and death are *nirvāṇa*. This is referred to as original nature being *nirvāṇa* and not being different from *nirvāṇa*.
- (2) The Lesser Vehicle only cuts off seeing and thinking within the border realms, while the Major Vehicle also cuts off delusions and ignorance outside the border realms (the three *dharma* realms), which is called the difference between eliminating confusions within and without the realms.
- (3) The Lesser Vehicle is without self and without wisdom — it has not yet thoroughly realised the virtue of *prajñā* of the dharma-body. The Major Vehicle, on the other hand, then satisfies both self and

²⁵⁰ It is important to emphasize that Binzong is not speaking only about a conceptual difference, but about a factual difference, which exists due to different levels of realization.

wisdom, a complete collection of all virtues. This is called the difference of being equipped and not equipped with all virtues.

Allow me to quote an excerpt from a *sūtra* to serve as a supplementary explanation of the principle of being equipped and not equipped with all virtues, so that the reader can more easily understand it. The second part of the *Fahua Xuanzan* 法華玄贊 commentary on the *Lotus-sūtra* reads as follows:

First, the spiritually radiant and wondrous awakening (*miaojue* 妙覺) into the substance of true *thusness* (*tathatā*) is called *prajñā*. The other name is awakening about self-nature (*jue xing* 覺性). The substance of enlightenment (*nirvāṇa*) in Lesser Vehicles is not the awakening of self-nature, which is why it is not called *prajñā*. Second, the substance of the true *thusness* of things transcends the obstacles of the object of knowing and is thus called the dharma-body (*dharmakāya*), its other name is the object on which the *dharma* of all virtues and merits depend. Now, because the enlightenment of the Lesser Vehicle does not serve as the basis of *dharma*s of all virtues and merits, we do not call it the dharma-body. Third, when all forms of suffering have been extinguished from the substance of true *thusness*, this is called ‘liberation’; that is so because one has thus left the delimited and transformative *samsāras* (*fenduan bianyi* 分段變易). Because the Lesser Vehicle has only separated itself from delimited existence (*fenduan* 分段) and not yet from the forms of transformative existence (*bianyi* 變易), therefore it does not lead to perfect liberation.

Based on what was said above, the object of elimination in the *nirvāṇa* of the Lesser Vehicle are the afflictions of seeing and thinking, the object of cessation is delimited *samsāra* (*fenduan shengsi* 分段生死), and the object of realisation the principle of one-sided emptiness. Consequently, its causes of life and death are solely the afflictions of seeing and thinking, while its effects of life and death refer to the self (body) that relies on impurities (that is the body based on experiencing life and death because of impurity of mental afflictions). The objects of elimination for the Major Vehicle,

however, are the afflictions caused by endless ignorance, the object of cessation is birth and death (*saṃsāra*) as caused by [endless] transformations [of the mental continuum]. In this way, it thus treats delusions (mental impurities) and ignorance as the cause of transmigration, of birth and death and the *dharma*-characteristics of emptiness and the two extremes as the result of the transmigration of birth and death.

When members of the Two Vehicles achieve cessation of delimited birth and death, they will no longer undergo rebirth, and will reach *nirvāṇa*. The Major Vehicle *bodhisattvas* and *buddhas* separate themselves from transformative life-and-death, they cease the delusional and return to truth, realising *nirvāṇa* without remainder. It could probably be said that:

the *buddhas* cease the transformation of the emanation body (*yingshen* 應身, *nirmāṇakāya*)²⁵¹ and return to the root of the truth body.

This is called *nirvāṇa* without remainder.

In short, as for the *nirvāṇas* realised by the Two Vehicles, their fundamental substance is the eternal silencing of conceptual and mental afflictions, and they reveal the principle of the absolute truth of unbalanced emptiness. In terms of the *nirvāṇa* realised by *bodhisattvas*, its fundamental substance is the eternal silencing of the afflictions of dust and sand,²⁵² revealing the balanced principles of the middle and conventional truth. Finally, in terms of the *nirvāṇa* realised by the Buddha, its substance is the eternal silencing of

²⁵¹ The response body is one of the three bodies (*sanshen* 三身, Sanskrit *trikāya*) manifested by the Buddha. It is also known as ‘transformation-response body’ (*huayingshen* 化應身) or ‘transformation body’ (*huashen* 化身). The Sanskrit term *nirmāṇakāya* is also translated as ‘emanation body.’ Aside from the ‘transformation body,’ the Buddha is also thought to have manifested the ‘dharma body’ (*dharmakāya*) and the ‘truth body’ (*saṃbhogakāya*) (see Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 923).

²⁵² The Tiantai school uses the term ‘dust and sand’ (*chensha* 塵沙) as a synonym for one of the three kinds of mental disturbances. Its meaning ‘dust and sand’ implies the ‘innumerable details’ related to the *dharma*s dealt with by a *bodhisattva*. It is namely that a *bodhisattva* must face the task to deal with innumerable details related to saving all living beings. The term can also appear in the form *chensha huo* 塵沙惑, which means ‘mental disturbance of innumerable details.’ In this sense ‘afflictions of dust and sand’ means afflictions caused by the disturbances of the innumerable atoms of dust and sand.

the afflictions of ignorance, revealing the principle of the true nature of things of the middle truth.

Even though the Lesser Vehicle does not count as perfect liberation, it is already able to evade delimited *saṃsāra*, which is why it also deserves to be called *nirvāṇa* — a small *nirvāṇa*; the three virtues only contain a part of liberation. As for the *nirvāṇa* realised by the Major Vehicle, it is certainly very different. It completely eradicates mental afflictions, it perfects liberation, the realisation of the three bodies, and the attainment of the three cognitions; being equipped with the three virtues of the *dharma*-body, *prajñā*, and liberation, the four virtues of eternity, bliss, self, and purity do not fail. The complete *nirvāṇa* as spoken about by this *sūtra* refers to attaining this kind of state.

Apart from this, there also exists the *nirvāṇa* of innate purity and the *nirvāṇa* of nonabiding. Together with the aforementioned two *nirvāṇas* (with and without remainder), these make up the four kinds of *nirvāṇa*. With remainder and without remainder are the shared realisation of the Three Vehicles; in which there is no difference with ordinary people. The *nirvāṇa* of innate purity is possessed both by ordinary and sagely beings. The *nirvāṇa* of nonabiding is attained only by the fruit of *buddha*-hood. Now, we shall give a brief explanation of these two kinds of *nirvāṇa*: ‘*nirvāṇa* of innate purity’ speaks about the self-substance of all *dharma*s; since self-nature is originally empty it does not require any other things to amend it; since all *dharma*s are equal, the sagely and the common are not two originally existing natures. The ‘*nirvāṇa* of nonabiding’ speaks about not abiding in life and death, and not abiding in *nirvāṇa*, because it is the perfection of merit and wisdom, it moreover has nothing to pursue. Although substance is *thusness* (*ruru* 如如), it can remain unmoved while following conditions. Although function is born and dies, it can follow conditions while remaining unmoved. Also, because of great compassion, one does not abide in *nirvāṇa* (cannot stand still and only observe living beings as they sink into the suffering of life and death and do nothing to save them); and because of great wisdom, one does not abide in life and death (not being deluded by ignorance and driven by karmic forces), and therefore it is called nonabiding.

Above we have spoken about various kinds of *nirvāṇa*, now we will set out to explain its meaning.

Niepan 涅槃 [*nirvāṇa*] is a Sanskrit word, its standard pronunciation in Chinese [comes from] the Pāli [word] *nibbāna* (*nifunan* 暱縛男). But because its old version was *niepan* the contemporary expression also follows the old transliteration and is written as *niepan* 涅槃. Aside from this, it was also called *nihuan* 泥洹 or *niepanna* 涅槃那, which are both either false phonetically or the Sanskrit does not agree with the Chinese. Older translations include *miedu* 滅度 (extinguishing), or even *jimie* 寂滅 (fading away), nonaction (*wuwei* 無為), *jietuo* 解脫 (freeing oneself), *anle* 安樂 (stability and happiness), *busheng bumie* 不生不滅 (not born and not dying) etc. Although these are different in name, their meanings are more or less the same. Now we shall only give explanations of the terms *miedu* (extinguishing) and *jimie* (fading away): *meidu* means the ‘eliminating’ (*mie* 滅) of affliction, and ‘relieving’ (*du* 度) oneself from the suffering of life and death (*nirvāṇa* in the Lesser Vehicle thus represents the elimination of the afflictions of seeing and thinking, and relief from delimited *saṃsāra*, that of the Major Vehicle, on the other hand, constitutes an elimination of dust and sand and ignorance, and liberation from delimited birth and death). In *jimie* 寂滅, *ji* 寂 denotes the tranquillity of essential nature, while *mie* 滅 denotes the elimination of afflictions. We could also say that the realisation and attainment of ‘tranquillity’ of the substance of self-nature naturally ‘eliminates’ all these afflictions, and that the elimination of afflictions naturally allows one to realise the tranquil substance of self-nature. The *Treatise of wisdom* says:

Nie 涅 stands for ‘exiting’ (*chu* 出) and *pan* 槃 stands for ‘destinations’ (*qu* 趣), meaning forever exiting all destinations of birth and death.

Hence, the term could also be translated as *chuqu* 出趣.

If we explore newer translations — Master Xuanzang translates it as *yuanji* 圓寂, the meaning of this term appears to be comparatively revised, because terms like *jimie*, *miedu*, *jietuo* and so on, speak merely from the perspective

of the virtue of eliminating afflictions (annihilating the afflictions of birth and death). *Yuanji* 圓寂, on the other hand, unifies the two virtues of wisdom and elimination. We will try to give a brief explanation of the term.

Possessing all the meritorious virtues of wisdom is referred to as *yuan* 圓, and eternally separating oneself from all afflictions of birth and death is called *ji* 寂. To put it more simply, it is the state when all virtues are ‘complete’ and all troubles have been ‘silenced.’ Speaking in detail, it is the perfect and whole accomplishment of the two adornments of good moral conduct and wisdom (*yuan* 圓), when the afflictions of the three delusions have been thoroughly cleared away, and one has been completely freed from the two kinds of birth and death (*ji* 寂). Being no more perplexed by the afflictions of birth and death, restoring the innate substance of the mind, which contains the ‘perfect’ (*yuan*) understanding of the illumination of ‘silence’ (*ji*), and obtaining purely good and purely beautifully adorned and majestic liberation. This is what is meant by the state of *nirvāṇa*, perfect silencing (*yuanji* 圓寂). While the character *yuan* (perfect) speaks about the aspect of advancing towards the good (attaining all virtues and merits); the character *ji* (silence) speaks about the aspect of eliminating the harmful (removing delusions and eliminating suffering).

In the light of this aspect, it seems that the term ‘perfect silencing’ (*yuanji*) belongs to the unconditioned enlightenment of the Mahāyāna, while the terms quieting (*jijing* 寂靜) and extinguishing (*miedu* 滅度) and so on are all parts of Hīnayāna enlightenment.

In brief the term *yuanji* 圓寂 refers to the attainment of ‘the true mind of perfect brightness and silent illumination.’ The true mind inherently possesses all virtues (*yuan* 圓) for it is eternally separated from all afflictions (*ji* 寂). Although becoming a *buddha* consists of realising this true mind, *nirvāṇa* is not a property reserved exclusively to all *buddhas*. It is merely that ordinary people have been blinded by dreamlike illusions and are thus unable to realise and attain it. What is thus meant by being deluded is harbouring inverted beliefs and dreamlike illusions, and what is meant by

being awakened is perfect enlightenment. Now, if we contemplate the dreamlike illusions using *prajñā* they appear unreal and fabricated, so that one naturally does not give rise to inverted beliefs and attachments. In this way, the true mind is clearly manifest and not confused by anything. But these dreamlike illusions are essentially arisen based on the intrinsic enlightenment of the true mind. It thus seems that just as I can eradicate a part of a dreamlike illusion, at the same time, I am also able to realise a part of true awakening. This is just like cleaning away a section of dust from a mirror at a time, then light can shine on this part of its surface. In so doing, I can eventually attain complete cessation and complete realisation. In that instant, when all virtues and wisdoms have been ‘completely’ (*yuan*) restored and all afflictions of birth and death have been completely emptied and ‘silenced,’ this is complete enlightenment. If these merits and virtues of wisdom contain something that is not yet completed, then something is still required. If the afflictions and karmic confusions possess something that has not yet faded away, then there is still something that needs to be annihilated. If there are still things that are required and things that need to be cut off, then can we speak about the final? Only being without requirements, and without anything to cut off counts as final and complete enlightenment.

Considering what was said above, final enlightenment refers to attaining the ‘great extinguishing.’ This should be distinguished from the lesser extinguishing, that is, ‘extinguishing’ (*mie*) only the afflictions of seeing and thinking and being only ‘liberated’ (*du* 度) from delimited *samsāra*.

If we closely investigate its meaning, the word *jiujing* 究竟 denotes the ultimate as opposed to what is not final and complete. When we call the *nirvāṇa* with remainder of the Lesser Vehicle incomplete, we do so in contrast to the Major Vehicle’s *nirvāṇa* without remainder, which is therefore referred to as ultimate *nirvāṇa*. Some scholars interpret the word *jiujing* 究竟 as a verb, which is supposed to mean that the subject of breaking free from inverted beliefs and dreamlike illusions can finally realise and attain enlightenment. If this is indeed the case, then it does not necessarily refer to the *nirvāṇa* without remainder of the Major Vehicle. This *sūtra*, however, belongs to the Mahāyāna ‘perfection of wisdom’ *sūtras*, which is why what is described are the Mahāyāna principles. Of course, if the

enlightenment described were not to be Mahāyāna enlightenment, then what else remains? The other possibility is that the word is an adjective, referring to the relative perfection of Mahāyāna *nirvāṇa* without remainder. In the world, there also exist some people, who do not understand the meaning of the teachings, who go as far as to regard *nirvāṇa* as a synonym for death. This is a fundamental mistake. It needs to be known that *nirvāṇa* requires several aeons of all *buddhas*' diligent efforts. It is the prize exchanged for the accumulated deeds of all virtues and merits. Speaking about the *nirvāṇa* of the Lesser Vehicle, it can also be achieved only through accumulated cultivation of various meritorious deeds. But if an average person's death can already be considered a *nirvāṇa*, in this way one is losing the very character of *nirvāṇa*. As for calling a Buddhist monk's passing away 'perfect silencing' (*yuanji*), this is a form of expression praising the completion of the fruits of their meritorious spiritual cultivation. It may be that his meritorious deeds have already realised the realm of *nirvāṇa*, but this cannot be known yet. In short, we cannot say that his death was indeed his *nirvāṇa*. If death were indeed *nirvāṇa*, then the death of a dog would be called a dog's *nirvāṇa*, and we can even say that a chicken's death is that chicken's *nirvāṇa*. This would be laughable.

Now, if you do not mind the trouble, we shall give a comprehensive explanation of this passage. 'There is nothing to attain' means that there are no attachments to be recognised within our self-nature. Although all *dharma*s are originally without self-nature (i.e., empty), because sentient beings are beclouded by ignorance and dreamlike illusions, they deludedly give rise to all kinds of attachments. If there is no *wisdom* of ultimate emptiness, then how would we be able to reflect thoroughly on the principle of emptiness of all *dharma*s? As soon as it is under the luminous observation of *prajñā*, one by one, they all reveal their original shape — that they are all empty and that there is nothing to attain. Because if there were something to attain, then there would be something to cling to. Once one has attachments, one is bound to produce 'impediments.' Once there are impediments, one is unable to avoid 'anxieties' and then 'inverted beliefs and dreamlike illusions' will be in continuous movement. How would one then attain the field of liberation by dying away? Relying on *prajñā*, the *bodhisattva* is able to see that all *dharma*s are empty, naturally not giving birth to clinging. Since there is no

clinging, there are also no impediments. Since there are no impediments, then is there still anything to fear? Without anxieties, do not inverted beliefs and dreamlike illusions also become formless and eliminated? It is thus natural that obtaining perfect liberation — complete *nirvāṇa* — is spoken about as ‘*bodhisattvas* rely on the practice of perfection of wisdom... complete enlightenment.’

A *bodhisattva*’s complete enlightenment is the path of attaining *buddha*-hood, which is why the subsequent text says: ‘all *buddhas* of the three periods of time ... unsurpassed complete perfect awakening.’

II Synthetic explanation: ‘Because’ *prajñā* can make one see clearly the real nature of all *dharmas*, that basically ‘there is nothing to attain,’ ‘therefore’ the ‘*bodhisattva*’ (Guanyin) was able to attain an ‘unimpeded mind’ by ‘having relied’ on the cultivation of the Dharma-gate of *prajñā*. Because the *bodhisattva*’s mind had no impediments, therefore there was nothing to ‘fear and dread,’ and as a result ‘keeps far away’ from all the delusions of ‘inverted beliefs and dreamlike illusions’ and attain the ‘complete enlightenment’ of great extinguishing and great extirpation. Here ends part E4 on understanding of a *bodhisattva*’s attainment of the fruit of the elimination.

E5 Understanding the Buddha's attainment of the fruit of wisdom

Sanshi zhufu, yi bore boluomiduo gu, de anouduoluosanmiaosan puti!

三世諸佛，依般若波羅密多故，得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提！

Because all *buddhas* of the three periods of time rely on the perfection of wisdom, they attain unsurpassed complete perfect awakening.

I Analytic explanation: *Sanshi* 三世 speaks about different times, that is the present, past, and future. Speaking from a vertical perspective, it refers to all ages. *Zhufu* 諸佛 means many *buddhas*, *zhu* 諸 is a plural. Speaking from the horizontal aspect, it refers to all *buddhas* of the worlds in all ten directions. The whole name of a *buddha* ought to be written as *Fotuo* 佛陀, but because in China we are fond of brevity, it was shortened to *Fo* 佛. The Sanskrit term *buddha* (*fotuo*) is translated as the ‘awakened one’ (*juezhe* 覺者). In fact, it ought to be translated as the ‘great awakened one’ (*dajuezhe* 大覺者), only this translation would befit his [original] denomination. *Jue* 覺 is *juewu* 覺悟 (awakening/enlightenment) and *zhe* 者 is a person, combined the characters *juezhe* 覺者 mean an awakened/enlightened person. But why do we translate it as ‘the awakened one’ (*juezhe* 覺者) and not the ‘awakened human’ (*jueren* 覺人)? Because the scope of the meaning of the character *ren* 人 (human) is comparatively small and the scope of *zhe* 者 is comparatively larger. The character ‘one’ (*zhe* 者) can extend outside humankind to include all sentient beings. The *sūtra* says:

All beings with a mind (consciousness) (*zhe* 者) can become *buddhas*.

If we were to translate it as the awakened person, can all those conscious beings outside of humanity also become *buddhas*? This can be found to stand in contradiction with the theory that all living beings possessing mental capacity (*hanling* 含靈) to be moved by the Buddha's teaching, possess *buddha*-nature. If we say that there is nothing hindering these beings from

attaining *buddha*-hood, then living beings with dragon-like bodies who would turn into *buddhas* — such as the Dragon Daughter²⁵³ who became a *buddha* at the age of eight, should be called the ‘awakened dragon.’ Maybe all living beings with, say, bodies *x* and *y*, who attain *buddha*-hood should also be named in accordance with their original identity, the awakened *x* and *y*? In this way, we would be unable to avoid inconsistencies with propriety. The term *buddha* is thus translated as the awakened one (*juezhe*) and not as the awakened human (*jueren*).

What exactly is a *buddha* awakened to? A *buddha* has become enlightened about the truth of the universe and the true nature of human life (*rensheng* 人生). His awakening is his ability to inspect the content of the universe and life with exceptional clarity, having a profound understanding of its profoundest aspects. But what is the truth of the universe and the true nature of human life? Honestly speaking, it is the emptiness of dependently arisen inner nature. This is a form of correct conclusion reached by a *buddha* when observing the universe and human life. All sentient beings have been confused about the principle of dependently arisen inner nature. They thus falsely assume that the myriad phenomena-appearances of the universe are the true *dharma* and that the illusory physical bodies of provisional compositions of the four elements are the true self. Thus, they are infatuated with clinging in all directions, causing an entire field of troubles to arise. Because a *buddha* has been enlightened into these principles and is not deluded by them, he is called the awakened one. At the same time, it can also be said that he was awakened to the truth that human life is suffering, empty, impermanent and self-less. All other living beings, however, are blind with regard to the burning house of the three realms brimming with multiple kinds of suffering, while at the same time maintaining that suffering is joy. They are unaware that the entire substance of the myriad dependently arisen things is empty, mistaking false for true. They are unaware that all actions are impermanent and that they are the *dharma*s of birth and death, they take the impermanent as permanent. They do not understand that the four elements

²⁵³ The ‘Dragon daughter’ is a figure from the *Lotus sutra*; she is also known as the *nāgakanyā* or the *nāga* maiden. The *sūtra* describes her as the daughter of the dragon king, Sāgaranāgarāja, who lived at the bottom of the ocean. According to the *sūtra*, she attained *buddha*-hood at the age of eight under the tutelage of Mañjuśrī.

are all empty, that they are originally self-less, instead counting the self-less as the self. In so doing, they mix up true and false. These fabrications arise without beginning, have forever deluded all living beings into a dreamlike state, from which they do not awaken, until one day all was realised by a *buddha* — who became awakened about the nature of everything that exists in the universe and that human life is nothing more than that. We could say that the Buddha's enlightenment broke through the enigma of human life, having revealed the secrets of the universe. This is exactly what constitutes the reason we call him the awakened one.

If we regard *buddha*-hood in the light of the meaning of awakening (*jue* 覺), three such meanings can be listed:

- (1) Self-awakening (*zijue* 自覺), on the outside one becomes awakened about the constant transformations and impermanence of all *dharmas*, as pointed out above; and on the inside one becomes awakened about the truth that everyone possesses permanent, unborn and unceasing *buddha*-nature.
- (2) Awakening others (*jueta* 覺他), this is meant in the sense that the one who first attains awareness awakens those who attain such awareness later. All living beings cannot liberate themselves because they have not come to understand. A *buddha*, on the other hand, cannot bear to only observe other deluded living beings sinking in the sea of suffering, while they themselves reside in the blissful abode of self-liberation. As a result they set out to illuminate the principles of their own self-enlightenment to being after being, engaging actively in relieving others of their suffering, with the goal to lead all beings towards enlightenment, enabling them to attain the peaceful and blissful state of liberation.
- (3) Complete awakening (*jueman* 覺滿, completion of enlightenment) is when both the meritorious enterprises of self-awakening and awakening others have been finally completed — when the wisdom of self-awakening has been completed and the pleasure of awakening others has been completely fulfilled. The perfection of the wisdom of self-awakening is a wisdom of awareness originating

from the original *bodhi*-mind (*putixin* 菩提心, *bodhicitta*), which relies on the principle of inherent awareness (*benjue* 本覺). In turn, relying on this wisdom, one breaks through confusions. First, one cuts off the delusions of seeing and thinking, and then also the delusions of sense objects, until finally one eliminates ignorance. When the three delusions have been completely eliminated and the three wisdoms fully realised, one has become aware of the origin of the one mind (*ekacitta*), and when one's wisdom is thus perfected, this is the perfection of the wisdom of self-awakening. The perfection of the joy of awakening others is when, following self-awakening, one relies only on the Supreme Vehicle, and thus produces the *bodhi*-mind, making the aiding of other living beings one's task and propagating Buddhist teaching one's work. When the three *asaṅkhyeyakalpas* have passed, and the myriad acts of the six perfections have been widely cultivated, having universally prompted the awareness of sentient beings of the Dharma realm, and all virtuous achievements have come to their conclusion, this is then called the perfection of the joy of awakening others. In the perfection of the joy and wisdom of self-awakening and awakening others, what is called possessing all the virtues of the perfection of three awakenings (*sanjue* 三覺) is referred to as *buddha*-hood. To illustrate this principle, we mention the example of the life of Śākyamuni Buddha: from the time he left home to the moment when he became awakened to the way while gazing at Venus under the *bodhi* tree, [then] the period of 49 years of teaching the Dharma, between the time he started transmitting Buddhist teachings until his attainment of *nirvāṇa*, was the stage of awakening others, up until when in the Crane forest (*Helin* 鶴林) his cause came to an end and he passed away, which constituted complete awakening.

Self-awakening differs from the nonawareness of deluded ordinary people in that it transcends the six unenlightened Dharma realms. Awakening others differs from the self-awakening of the Two Vehicles in that it transcends the Dharma realm of the *śrāvaka*. Completed awakening differs from the partial realisation of a *bodhisattva* in that it transcends the Dharma realm of *bodhisattvas*. In summary, the Buddha's teaching about self-realisation is

self-awakening; the Buddha's teaching of changing others is awakening others; when the work of changing others has by itself reached completion, this is completed awakening. Self-realisation pertains to the intellectual (consciousness, realisation) aspect, which takes the universe and human life as object of realisation. Awakening others is the practical aspect of compassion (changing and liberating others), which takes as the object of liberation all sentient beings. 'Completed awakening' concerns the unity of knowledge and practice: here, the sole objective is the perfection of both merit-generating practice and of wisdom, which [perfection] benefits self and other. From this point of view, the Buddha truly was a person who attained complete enlightenment about the truth of human life, a true sage of majestic personality, who accomplished the perfection of benefiting others.

It was because the Buddha accomplished all forms of 'wisdom' (*zhihui* 智慧), he was therefore able to instruct all living beings — dispelling confusion to initiate awareness, exposing falsehoods to reveal truth. It is because the Buddha accomplished all 'merits and virtues' he was able to universally benefit sentient beings in all the ten directions — in the four births and six realms, uniformly and equally removing our suffering and bestowing joy. As for spiritual powers and virtues, vows and practices, he was able to comprehend every single one of them.

Based on what was said above, the essence of the Buddha's realisation resided in external realisation of the principle of the inherent emptiness of the nature of everything arisen from dependent origination, and internal realisation that the self-mind itself originally contains *buddha*-nature.

But awakening (*jue*) is the opposite of confusion (*mi*). Infatuated with delusions, all living beings constantly suffer the pains of birth and death; an awakened *buddha*, on the other hand, eternally experiences the peace and bliss of liberation. It was thus only an awakened *buddha*, who unveiled the reality of deluded living beings. The three, original mind, the *buddha*, and all living creatures cannot be distinguished from one another. After all, the dividing line between them resides between the states of confusion and realisation. We must realise that *buddha*-nature is inherently possessed by everyone. We are, for instance, able to awaken directly out of the confusion

of dreams, while at the same time we are also able to imitate the Buddha's spirit²⁵⁴ to save the world. When the real undertakings of benefiting oneself and benefiting others is brought to completion, we will also become *buddhas*.

Secondly, do the Two Vehicles then possess no awareness and realisation? What is the reason their followers could not be called *buddhas* — awakened ones? Because their realisation only attains the truth of unbalanced emptiness (self-realisation is not yet brought to completion), and, in particular, because they focus solely on benefiting self — aiming to attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death (without the mission of awakening others), therefore their [meritorious achievements] do not suffice for them to be called *buddhas* — awakened ones. What about the *bodhisattvas*, do they also not engage in the enterprise of awakening the others? Now, what is then the reason for them not to be called *buddhas*? The reason is that the meritorious virtue of awakening others has not yet been completed (the joy is still insufficient). Sometimes, some minute aspects of ignorance still have not been eliminated, which is why the object of realisation has not yet been completely attained. Such as, for example, things like the moon of the fourteenth night (the full moon, wisdom is still insufficient). This is the reason why they also cannot be called *buddhas*.

Within the Three Vehicles of sage-like character, only the majestic importance of the Buddha is exhibited, which is why it has been pointed out above that, it is only suitable to translate the [term] the Buddha as the great awakened one (*dajuezhe* 大覺者).

The principle of these three awakenings is the same as that described in the *Great learning* (*Daxue* 大學), which speaks about 'illustrating illustrious virtue' (*zai ming ming de* 在明明德, that is self-awakening), 'being in touch and helping the people' (*zai qin min* 在親民, awakening others), and 'residing in the supreme good' (*zai zhi yu zhishan* 在止於至, complete realisation).

²⁵⁴ 'Spirit' in the sense of 'determination.'

‘Attain[ing] unsurpassed complete perfect awakening’ (*de anouduoluo sanmiaosan puti* 得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提); *de* 得 (attaining), is perfecting one’s virtues by practice and cultivation. It is to immerse oneself into the principle of inherent awakening by setting out from the wisdom of initial awareness, and in turn achieving the unity of principles and wisdom; thus attaining complete awakening is called *de* 得 (attaining). In fact, however, such attaining does not necessarily attain anything, for it is already inherently existent within oneself.

A 阿 translates as ‘un-’ (*wu* 無); *nouduoluo* 耨多羅 translates as ‘surpassing’ (*shang* 上), *san* 三 translates as ‘right’ (*zheng* 正), and *miaosan* 藐三 translates as ‘equal’ (*deng* 等) and *puti* 菩提 as ‘perfect enlightenment’ (*zhengjue* 正覺). Bound together, the expression thus means ‘unsurpassed, correct, perfect enlightenment.’ This expression is most conveniently read in Chinese by starting from the last words, that is perfect enlightenment, moving back towards the beginning.

As regards *zhengjue* 正覺 (*zheng* 正 as ‘not mistaken,’ and *jue* 覺 as ‘not confused’) it denotes correct awakening (enlightenment) — a form of correct wisdom that keeps away from inflated conceptualisations, distorted notions. The expression aims at drawing a distinction between such an awakening and the unawareness of ordinary beings on the one hand, as well as the perverted awareness of heretical teachings. Because all living beings have a beginningless existence, strong attachments to delusions are buried in their true minds of inherent awakening (enlightenment), deep within the five aggregates, and render them deluded and unaware. As a result of which we call them unenlightened living beings. Because in nonBuddhist schools the Dharma is sought outside the mind, while the method of realisation is wrong and thus harmful, therefore these schools do not qualify to be called ‘correct enlightenment’ (*zhengjue*).

Zhengdeng 正等 (what is *zheng* is not partial, and *deng* is equal), after self-awakening one is not at all selfish, and can thus be correctly impartial and equal towards everyone, which is why one is able to diligently conduct the work of benefiting others. This differs from the *pratyekabuddhas* of the Two

Vehicles. Although the Two Vehicles contain so-called 'correct enlightenment,' they focus, however, on self-improvement and not on benefiting others, which is why they are partial and not correct, not having equal universal mind, which is why they cannot be called 'correct and impartial' (*zhengdeng* 正等).

Wushang 無上, when the three awakenings²⁵⁵ are completed, one is equipped with all virtues, and thus unsurpassable in their possession — from the perspective of self-realisation, the perfection of wisdom is supreme (*wushang*). When it comes to its aspect of aiding others, however, there is then nothing that would be above perfection of virtue (joy). This is to be distinguished from the partial realisation of the *bodhisattvas*. Regardless that the *bodhisattva*'s equal regard for absolute and conventional truth makes them capable of self-awakening and awakening others, it is only that the wisdom of their self-realisation has not yet been perfected, for there still exist some particles of ignorance not yet removed. At the same time, their virtue of helping others has not yet been completed, for there still exist the fruits of *buddha*-hood above them, which they can still pursue. Consequently, they can only be described using 'correct and impartial' and 'correct realisation,' while they are inadequate to be called 'unsurpassed.' Only a *buddha* attains the double perfection of joy (*le*) and wisdom, realising complete perfection, only he is fit to be referred to with the name of 'unsurpassed, correct, and impartial enlightenment' (*zhengjue* 正覺 (correct enlightenment) is self-awakening, correct and impartial (*zhengdeng* 正等) is awakening others, and unsurpassed (*wushang* 無上) is complete awakening). Why is it then that these nine characters are not directly translated as pointed out above, but

²⁵⁵ The 'three awakenings' (*sanjue* 三覺) or the 'three kinds of enlightenment,' Sanskrit *trividham avabodham* are also interpreted as:

- (1) *benjue* 本覺 the 'inherent enlightenment' of all beings;
- (2) *shijue* 始覺 'initial enlightenment'; and
- (3) *jiujing jue* 究竟覺 'ultimate enlightenment.'

This second version is given in the *Awakening of faith*. The three types of awakening listed by Binzong further correspond to the stages of the *arhat*, who attains self-enlightenment; the *bodhisattva*, who also attains the enlightenment of the others; and a *buddha*, who attains all three enlightenments, including perfect enlightenment and accomplishment.

instead still written in a form preserving the Sanskrit pronunciation? Because the entire term is an epithet of a *buddha*, who has perfected the three awakenings. The term remains untranslated as a token of respect to the Buddha. It is the case that in four examples of translations of *sūtras* they translate the words and do not translate the phonetic readings, and in five cases they hit the nail on the head by honouring him and not translating.

If the present text explaining all *buddhas* attaining the fruits of wisdom mentions the three ages, the above text explaining the *bodhisattva*'s attainment of the fruits of annihilation must most often refer to the ten directions. In this context, it is only appropriate to speak about the ten directions of *bodhisattvas*. Nevertheless, in this *sūtra* this was not the case. I believe that this was done because of the brevity of the text. In my humble opinion, speaking about the three ages must already contain the ten directions, and mentioning the ten directions must also include the three ages. The three ages are the vertical dimension (time), and the ten directions are the horizontal dimension (space). The horizontal dimension expresses boundlessness (*wubian* 無邊) and the vertical dimension expresses the inexhaustible (*wujin* 無盡). Boundless and inexhaustible is what all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* really are, for in their cultivation and realisation they all rely on *prajñā*. The Dharma-gate of the enlightenment of *prajñā* is extremely subtle indeed. In this way, only this text of the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* possesses an abundance of what it takes to attain *buddha*-hood. As the *sūtras* say, *prajñā* is the mother of all *buddhas*.

In summary, 'impediments' are the karmic cause of birth and death, and 'anxieties' are the karmic results of birth and death. 'Inverted beliefs' and 'dreamlike illusions' are karmic delusions of birth and death. '*Nirvāṇa*' and 'complete enlightenment' (*sanputi* 三菩提, *sambodhi*) are the fruits (consequences) of liberation — that is, that *nirvāṇa* can eliminate all the afflictions of birth and death is the fruit of breaking away, that *bodhi* is able of accomplishing all the benefits of merit and all wisdoms, is the consequence of wisdom. If there exist no karmic causes of birth and death (impediments), one is naturally free for all eternity (complete enlightenment), and able to realise the unsurpassed fruits of *buddha*-hood (*sambodhi*).

II Complementary discussion: One could probably also say that the preceding sentences in the *sūtra*, which say that ‘materiality differs not from emptiness ... materiality is emptiness ...’ clearly illuminate existence and not emptiness. The subsequent sentences ‘the core of emptiness is nonmateriality ... there is no wisdom and no attainment’ clearly illuminate emptiness and not existence. When the text further speaks about *bodhisattvas* realising *nirvāṇa* and all *buddhas* attaining *bodhi* (perfect awakening), does this not relay a circular manner of argumentation where the emphasis has been turned again to the exposition of what is empty yet not empty, and not empty as again empty? If by neglecting existence, one neglects emptiness, and by neglecting emptiness, one neglects existence, then how is it possible for the initial students of Buddhism not to misunderstand and eventually doubt the Buddhadharmas as a heterodox teaching? None would be surprised if this were so because they (the initiates) do not understand the *prajñā* of the true meaning of genuine emptiness, for they have not yet understood the principle of complete integration of the middle path. If one does not have a correct knowledge of this, the theory of emptiness and existence, and a thorough understanding of it, then one would have great difficulties avoiding committing irreverence, i.e., misunderstanding. If one does not know that ‘emptiness’ refers to genuine emptiness, and not the unbalanced emptiness of the Lesser Vehicle, and even less so non-Buddhist nihilist notions of emptiness. Since genuine emptiness is not empty, therefore all dependently arisen *dharma*s are just like that. ‘Existence’ (*you* 有)²⁵⁶ refers to wondrous existence (*miaoyou* 妙有) and not the absurd idea of emptiness maintained by ordinary people, neither is it the commonly seen existence of non-Buddhist philosophy. This wondrous existence is not existence as such, and therefore exactly as with the myriad *dharma*s of causality. Neither existing nor empty, both existing as well as empty, that is the meaning of the teaching

²⁵⁶ The reader has to keep in mind that the term *you* 有 cannot be directly equated with the Western philosophical notion of ‘existence.’ In Chinese tradition its meaning is closer to ‘presence,’ the state that ‘there is’ something. Similarly, its opposite *wu* 無, ‘absence’ is not to be understood in the sense of Western dialectics. Furthermore, in the Buddhist context, the term *you* 有 or Sanskrit *bhava* denotes a process or dynamic state of ‘becoming’ or ‘existence.’ In this same sense, the term is also applied as a name of one of the twelve links of dependent origination. This essential difference from the Western notion of ‘existence’ is also emphasized by Binzong himself (see the end of this sentence).

of the middle path. If one can understand this point of the view of the middle way of the Buddhadharma, then one naturally does not commit such misunderstandings. The Buddhist theory of the middle path has its own unique strong points, the marvels of which can truly not be delved into by those who have just entered the gate.

The Buddha's teaching, which was intended to enlighten all living beings, contains [the technique of] teaching in conformity with the mental capacity of listeners, the major premise of which resembles the idea of applying medicine in accordance with the disease. The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (*Zhongguanlun* 中觀論) says:

The great sage explains the *dharma* of emptiness, in order to achieve separation from all views; if we regard the aspect of emptiness, it does not change in all *buddhas*.

The *Diamond-sūtra* also says:

If I understand the meaning of what was taught by the Buddha, there is no fixed *dharma*-name for *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, while there is also no such thing as a fixed *dharma* of the Tathāgata we can speak about. Why is that so? The Dharma as expounded by the Tathāgata, can neither be attained nor spoken about.

It is only from this point that the teaching can be understood. Because ordinary beings are attached to existence, one speaks about emptiness to remedy their attachment. But once the illness of existence has been removed, [the remedy of] emptiness must also be dispelled. Otherwise, it can also become a kind of defect (attachment to emptiness). How is this different from the demented action of escaping a mountain top and falling into a ravine? In brief, one should not cling to existence and nonexistence, while at the same time we should be able not to give up existence and nonexistence. It is only this that counts as just the perfect adoption of the subtle principle of the perfect harmony of the middle way.

It must be borne in mind that what the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* conveys about the contemplation or object of feeling is that its substance is nothing else but emptiness, it is provisional, it is the mean. Therefore, clinging to existence is broken using reflection on the emptiness of all phenomena, and clinging to emptiness is broken with the use of

reflection on the provisional, and finally clinging to the two extremes is broken using the contemplation of the mean. Being in perfect harmony with everything, in no way departs from the idea of threefold contemplation in one mind (*yixin sanguan* 一心三觀) and the three truths seen in one object (*yijing sandi* 一境三諦). Here *di* 諦 is the *prajñā* of the true nature of things, *guan* 觀 is the *prajñā* of contemplation, and *jing* 境 is scriptural *prajñā*. It is neither oneness nor disparity. The absolute truth of the middle path resides in nonclinging. Speaking of the Buddhadharma, attachment to it constitutes an obstruction among individual phenomena, while if they are in harmony, then all *dharma*s are accommodated one with the other. Zhaogong's *On the unknowable nature of wisdom* (*Zhaogong bore wuzhi lun* 肇公般若無知論) says:

A fully realised human dwells in existence yet does not exist, and when he resides in nonexistence it is not that he is nonexisting.

The text also says that:

Although conditioned being²⁵⁷ is false, by relinquishing it is difficult to attain the path of the Buddha; although unconditioned being is true, however, clinging to it obscures the mind of wisdom.

These words are of utmost truth indeed.

The Buddha has already attained the above-described state of the perfect harmony of the middle path, which is why he was able to 'dim the radiance and mingle with the dust' (*he guang tong chen* 和光同塵) and 'roam the ten directions' (*zhouxuan shifang* 周旋十界) — that is to say, to follow conditions while remaining unmoved and remaining unmoved while following conditions. If I can truly embody the principle of the perfect harmony of the middle path, then it is admissible to obliterate one's mind while preserving the realm of external being (*you*), while at the same time it is also admissible to obliterate the existence of external objects while preserving the mind. If concurrently preserving both mind and external

²⁵⁷ In contrast to the Daoist term *youwei* 有為, which would mean something like 'possessing action,' the Buddhist term *youwei* refers to conditioned being, Sanskrit *saṃskṛta*. In this sense, *youwei* 'describes all impermanent phenomena, that is, all conditioned factors (*saṃskṛtadharma*) that are produced through the concomitance of causes and conditions' (Buswell & Lopez 2014: 758).

existence (i.e., existence and emptiness) is admissible, then how could it also not be admissible to obliterate both mind and external existence altogether (i.e., neither existence nor emptiness)?

In the world, there exists a group of ignorant self-deceiving people, who neither respect true cultivation nor true realisation, and who engage in empty chatter. These people cling to essential nature (*li* 理) while discarding real things and real phenomena, who when they open their mouth say that nothing exists but emptiness. What exactly are they emptying? Or who maintain that this very mind *is* the Buddha. What exactly do they call 'a *buddha*'? They ridicule the practice of moral precepts as foolish, and say worshipping the Buddha is mere lip-service while considering 'not attaining realisation' as the final realisation. By doing so they not only deceive themselves but other people as well. This is very regretful. Do such people and their notion of the *prajñā* of true emptiness even manage to come close to the wondrous principle of the middle path?

III Synthetic explanation: Not only do *bodhisattvas* attain complete enlightenment (*nirvāṇa*) by relying on *prajñā*, but so do all the *buddhas* of the three ages of the past, present and future, who, following the circumstances of their place of residence are all also engaged in the practice of cultivation relying on this supreme and subtle Dharma-gate of *prajñā*, as a result of which they were also capable of attaining unsurpassed, correct and impartial, perfect awakening (*anuttarasamyaksambodhi*) and perfect that fruit of *buddha*-hood.

Here ends part E5 on the understanding of a Buddha's attainment of the fruit of wisdom (this also concludes part D8 regarding the duality of the fruits of realisation).

B2 Esoteric evocation of *prajñā*

C3: On its names and the benefits of its evocation

C4: Reciting the text of the mantra

C3 On its names and benefits of its evocation

Gu zhi bore boluomiduo, shi dashenzhou, shi damingzhou, shi wushangzhou, shi wudengdengzhou. Neng chu yiqie ku! Zhenshi buxu!

故知般若波羅密多，是大神咒，是大明咒，是無上咒，是無等等咒。能除一切苦！真實不虛！

Therefore, it is known that this is the great inspiring mantra, the great enlightening mantra, the unexcelled mantra, the unequalled mantra. It dispels all suffering! It is genuine and veritable, and not false!

I Preliminary explanation: From this point onwards, the *sūtra* expounds esoteric *prajñā*. The Tathāgata’s teaching of Dharma to benefit all living beings contains both an exoteric as well as an esoteric aspect. In the *sūtras*, those parts which elucidate the principles by offering an explanation to instruct people how to practise, are called the exoteric teaching. Aspects of the Buddha’s teaching which cannot be explained and whose only function is to be adopted as practice are called esoteric recitations (*miyan* 密言). Exoteric teachings are the texts of *sūtras*, while the esoteric teachings consist of the mantras contained therein, such as the mantra ‘*Gate, gate, pāragate, pārasaṅgate, bodhi svāhā!*’ given in this *sūtra*. For this reason it is said that “*Sūtras* reveal the principles; mantras govern the mysteries.” Principles can be elucidated; mysteries are not subject to explication. In sum, an exoteric teaching means principles displayed by words and written characters, by

means of which people become enlightened through listening, and which allow people to benefit from practising in accordance with the teaching of Dharma (by developing wisdom), and finally eliminate the obstructions of mental afflictions. On the other hand, although esoteric teachings cannot be stated explicitly to people, therein still resides the formidable power possessed by the secret achievements and virtues of all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*. It is the enormous power of divine beings, which allows a person who chants and practices the [mantras] with utmost sincerity to attain unfathomable benefits — such as, an immense increase in merit and wisdom, and a reduction and elimination of impediments and karmic obstacles. By eliminating the two obstacles (obstacles of mental afflictions and obstacles of karmic impediments) and the eventual accomplishment of the two adornments (adornment of merit and adornment of wisdom), this will allow us to experience the free flow of the Tathāgata's originally intended Dharma of saving all living beings. Consequently, in his method of teaching, the Buddha often uses the combination of both exoteric and esoteric elements. This is the reason. Such are, for example, the Śūraṅgama mantra of the *Śūraṅgama-sūtra*, the Medicine Buddha mantra of the *Sūtra of the medicine Buddha* (*Yaoshi jing* 藥師經), the Pure land *dhāraṇī* (*Wangshengzhou* 往生咒) of the *Amitabha-sūtra* (*Mituo jing* 彌陀經).

The abovementioned is only one passage, while, in fact, following the cultivation of one Dharma, on the day we attain the meritorious achievements of our practice, we will be able to completely eliminate the two obstacles and completely realise the two adornments. Because the exoteric and esoteric are of the same function, the so-called exoteric achievements should be contained within the esoteric virtues, while the esoteric virtues ought to thoroughly penetrate the exoteric achievements. In this way, we are able to know that revealing first the exoteric *prajñā* is nothing else but displaying the esoteric meritorious achievements. Now, how could it be said that the esoteric *prajñā* is not secretly returning back into the exoteric achievements? This is the interpenetration of the esoteric and exoteric aspects.

Since it is certainly the case that the basic character of various living beings differs from each other, the Tathāgata had to combine both the exoteric and the esoteric in his teaching. Since there were some, who derived most

benefits from the exoteric teaching, the Tathāgata used these teachings to lead them. If some derived most benefit from esoteric teaching, then the Tathāgata instructed them about the esoteric mantras so that they could absorb them. Finally, there also existed people who benefited most from the support of a combination of esoteric and exoteric teaching, which is why after elucidating the esoteric teaching, the Tathāgata also taught some esoteric mantras. In this way, anyone could be made to benefit by means of practising contemplation most suitable for their nature. Moreover, if the esoteric and exoteric teachings are taught concurrently, everyone will have an opportunity to benefit. This *sūtra* is an example of just such a combination of teachings. Some people say by acquiring this gate to esoteric teachings, a practitioner may easily find and quickly apply other kinds of such teaching. This may not be necessarily so. In brief, since this superior and subtle gate of *prajñā* merges together the esoteric with the exoteric, then the incantation of the name of this mantra can communicate the name of the *sūtra*. Since, the *sūtra* speaks about the

great inspiring mantra, the great enlightening mantra, the unexcelled
mantra, the unequalled mantra

it could also be called the great inspiring *sūtra*, the great enlightening *sūtra*, the unequalled *sūtra*. Also, since the *sūtra* is called the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*, then there is no reason that the mantra could not be called the ‘heart mantra.’

II Analytic explanation: If we were to study the passage ‘therefore, it is known that this is’ in more detail, then we see that its meaning is consistent with both the preceding and the following text. What connects it with the preceding text is that the verses about exoteric *prajñā*’s function possesses the benefits of inconceivable virtue, akin to the ‘great inspiring mantra’ and so on — what this means is the aforementioned claim that *bodhisattvas* and all *buddhas* attain the perfect *nirvāṇa* and awakening of *bodhi* by relying on *prajñā*. Consequently, the capability of ‘therefore knowing *prajñā*’ is unfathomable. It truly cannot be described in ‘language’ or ‘quantitative measurement.’ It is, therefore, praised in connection with the names of four outstanding kinds of mantra and asserted that it resembles the virtues of the ‘great inspiring mantra, the great enlightening mantra.’ The passage is connected to the subsequent text in that it wants to first point out the name

of the esoteric mantra, which then follows — this means that the esoteric and exoteric virtues of *prajñā* are the same; since the exoteric teaching has this kind of surpassing characteristic, how could the characteristics of its esoteric teaching be exactly the same? Those who are capable of wholeheartedly accepting and maintaining [them both] can attain the [state] of unimpeded mind, and finally even the unsurpassed awakening of *bodhi*. Because the esoteric content of the incantation (mantra) cannot be explained, before giving the incantation itself, the *sūtra* first points out its names (this is the same as giving first the name of a *sūtra* and then also the contents of the *sūtra* itself), in order to make one realise both the esoteric and exoteric as achievements and virtues of an equal kind. When there was a special wish to first speak about the mantra, then first the name of the mantra is given. This is usually so when one wants people to give rise to firm belief and hope, so as to make them forge ahead and immerse themselves in cultivation. It further needs to be known that these names of mantras, we are given after the functions of these mantras. In the case of the present mantra though, its virtues and achievements differ in no way from those of the exoteric exposition of the *sūtra*. Thus, an unimpeded mind without anxieties is the great inspiring mantra; keeping far away from inverted beliefs and dreamlike illusions is the great enlightening mantra; final complete *nirvāṇa* is, as the supreme awakening of *bodhi* is, the unexcelled mantra; to closely realise the *prajñā* of the true nature of things is the unequalled mantra (*prajñā* is the mother of all *buddhas*, from which all merits and virtues are born; and the true nature of all things is the root of all *dharmas*, which completely possesses immeasurable virtues; beyond this world and within this world there exists no single thing, which would be equal to it, yet it itself is still the same as everything).

In the phrase ‘great inspiring mantra’ (*dashen zhou* 大神咒), the character *shen* 神 means possessing a mysterious force, which means that the one able to receive and maintain the Buddha’s teaching will possess a magical force to drive away all mental afflictions and be liberated from the sufferings of birth and death. It is therefore called the great inspiring mantra. In the phrase ‘great enlightening mantra’ (*daming zhou* 大明咒) the character *ming* 明 means illumination, which can make people, who accept and maintain Buddhism, expel ignorance from all living beings, and make them clearly

recognize their ignorance and delusions. Hence the name ‘great enlightening mantra.’ In the name, ‘unexcelled mantra’ (*wushang zhou* 無上咒), the word *wushang* 無上 means ‘most excellent’ which means that those who are able to accept and uphold Buddhism can advance directly towards supreme enlightenment, so that not even a single *dharma* within or without this world exceeds it. This is why we call it the ‘unexcelled mantra.’ Finally, this takes us to the name ‘unequalled mantra’ (*wudengdeng zhou* 無等等咒). Here the first character *deng* 等 means ‘comparable,’ while the second character *deng* 等 means ‘equal,’ so that the meaning of both characters together is that there is no Dharma, which can be deemed equal when compared against it. Thus, *wudeng* 無等 means the unsurpassed, which allows one who accepts and maintains it to attain supreme *bodhi*, awakening, so that beyond and within this world there is no Dharma which can be compared with it. It is therefore called the unequalled mantra. It can further lead to attainment of the fruits of *buddha*-hood and close realisation of the true nature of things — because true nature is absolutely equal and perfect, there exists no Dharma which can be deemed equivalent to it. The *Treatise on the perfection of great wisdom* says:

Unequalled is the name for the true nature of all *dharma*s, which no existing acts can attain, which knows no mental conceptualisation, and which cannot be destroyed. This is why it is called unequal.

Being able to eliminate all suffering demonstrates the results attainable from *prajñā*. Because *prajñā* possesses this kind of unique and superior power, it allows those who maintain it to wipe out all sufferings forever (the principle of all sufferings has already been explained in the preceding section on liberating oneself from all sufferings). In sum, only arriving at complete *nirvāṇa* and attaining the realisation of the unsurpassed fruits of *buddha*-hood enable one to remove all suffering completely and eternally. The source of all suffering lies in the inverted beliefs and dreamlike illusions of all living beings. If one sets oneself in accord with *prajñā*, be it either exoteric or esoteric, one gains the ability to eliminate delusions, to stimulate the growth of wisdom, to separate oneself from all distorted views and dreamlike illusions, to annihilate beginningless karmic hindrances, to suddenly cut off the karmic causes of birth and death. It is therefore said that it can wipe out

all suffering. We must know that although there is an entire spectrum of suffering, birth and death are its extreme forms, so that if we have not only extinguished delimited *samsāra* (*fenduan shengsi* 分段生死) then the two deaths will be eliminated forever. This is in complete agreement with the sentence in the text on the exoteric elucidation of *prajñā*, which speaks about liberation from all forms of suffering.

The words real and not illusory (*zhenshi buxu* 真實不虛) have two different explanations:

(1) To give careful exhortation to faith, this is the utmost expression of the compassionate mind of the *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*. Since mantras are words with a mysterious meaning, they are not translated. Although they represent a verbal expression, which praises and describes their virtues, I am afraid that there will still be people, who doubt it and not believe in it, the *Diamond-sūtra* says:

There will be living beings who will be able to hear the words explaining the chapters and sentences of the *sūtra*, yet still give rise to the question whether to believe in it or not?

Therefore, when the mantra has not yet been communicated, there can be a warning beforehand that one should observe the precepts and be encouraged to keep on the path: *prajñā* has this kind of unique superior capability, it is completely true and not even the least bit false, so that everyone can be absolutely certain about it, for only in this way will the superior benefits of *prajñā* not be lost.

The *Diamond-sūtra* says:

The Tathāgata is a person who speaks the truth, he is a speaker of real words, the words of suchness, not deceiving words, and a speaker of words that are not strange.

Now how exactly could there be such true and uniquely superior words declared by the Tathāgata himself and the strong sayings of the *bodhisattvas*, which we still do not believe and uphold as sincere and authentic.

(2) The second meaning is the ‘final.’ It refers to states, such as, for example, when one only annihilates the mental defilements of seeing

and thinking, and only ends delimited birth and death, which can only be described as escaping from a part of suffering and thus finally cannot be called a true escape. Only if we are able to completely cut off the three delusions, and destroy the two deaths forever, can this be referred to as the true escape from suffering. How can we otherwise speak about the word ‘true’? The results of cultivation and realisation as elucidated by this *sūtra* can truly be used to accomplish the true escape from suffering. *Buxu* 不虛 means correct. In other words, ‘correct.’ By practising spiritual cultivation relying on *prajñā* we can truly escape suffering — we can eliminate all suffering forever.

III Synthetic explanation: In accordance with the above, by practising self-cultivation relying on *prajñā* we can attain the realisation of *bodhi* and *nirvāṇa*. In this way, there is no doubt that *prajñā* is a great inspiring mantra. It is a great enlightening mantra. It is a supreme and unsurpassed mantra. It is a surpassing and incomparable mantra. Its power consists of the ability to eliminate all suffering. This really is a fact, a teaching which contains not even a grain of falsehood.

Here ends part C3 on names and benefits of evoking this mantra.

C4 Reciting the text of the mantra

Gu shuo bore boluomiduo zhou, ji shuo zhou yue: Jiedi, jiedi, bore jiedi, boluoseng jiedi, puti suopohe.

故說般若波羅密多咒，即說咒曰：揭諦揭諦，波羅揭諦，波羅僧揭諦，菩提娑婆訶

Speak, therefore, the perfection of wisdom mantra.

Recite the mantra in this way: *Gate, gate, pāragate, pārasaṃgate, bodhi svāhā.*

I Analytic explanation: “Speak, therefore, the perfection of wisdom mantra.”

The titles of the mantra have already been declared, while its merits and virtues have also all been explained. Therefore (*gu* 故), now the words of the mantra should be declared, so that all present and future sentient beings can maintain it and obtain freedom. Thus, they should ‘recite the mantra in this way: *Gate, gate...*’. This *sūtra* consists of altogether four verses or 18 syllables (characters), which is why it is very easy to remember and recite. Moreover, it possesses an unimaginable function and use. Only by being able to wholeheartedly recite this mantra can the practitioner naturally benefit considerably. Hence, there exists no real need to explain its meaning, for like the present one, all mantras are measureless marvellous mystical sayings of all the *buddhas*, which can only be understood by *buddhas*. It is thus really not for us ordinary people to analyse and understand these. Consequently, it is not only we Chinese scholars of Buddhism who do not engage in their explanation, but the same is also true of the Buddhist monks in India. Hence, mantras are one of the five cases, in which we do not translate, namely are a mystery which is not translated, it is also one of the four examples in which we do not translate words.

The Sanskrit word *dhāraṇī* (*tuoluoni* 陀羅尼) is translated as *zhou* 咒 in Chinese (here, we translate the general name for mantras and not the actual

incantation). The same Sanskrit word is also translated as *zongchi* 總持, which means the total (*zong*) collection of all merits, to grasp (*chi*) the measureless doctrine. It can also mean the ability to ‘totally grasp’ all good *dharmas*, causing them not to be lost, or ‘totally control’ all bad *dharmas*, preventing them from arising. It is also translated into Chinese as ‘true words’ (*zhenyan* 真言), because it is declared by the true mind of all *buddhas*. The term is also referred to as *miyu* 密語, that is incomprehensible, secret words [taught] by all *buddhas*, which neither ordinary people nor the followers of the Two Vehicles can understand, it is only suitable to preserve esoterically and learn esoterically, and cannot be explained at all. In short, mantras have measureless wondrous functions and, even though they cannot be explained, if a practitioner is able to wholeheartedly and piously recite it only once, this will give rise to a long-lasting insight, from which the practitioner will experience extraordinary effects, which will achieve a series of unfathomable merits and achievements — in a short time one will be able to approach the peacefulness of body and mind, avoid calamities and eliminate impediments, and increase wisdom. Over a long period of time, however, one will be able to liberate oneself from the afflictions of life and death and more quickly realise unsurpassed *bodhi*. Also, mantras often contain the names of spirits, deities, and powerful beings. If we recite them, these supernatural beings not only dare not inflict harm but can even assist the reciter. Consequently, one can concentrate on accepting and maintaining, the mantra by reciting it, so that in this time one will be forever without difficulties and temptations and other hindrances. The unfathomable merits of esoteric incantations (mantras) can certainly be extremely vast.

This kind of mysterious and incomprehensible mantra is exactly like the secret decree of a king, which it is only appropriate to respect and accept, and not publicly disseminate. It also resembles a verbal command within an army, so that we are able to call loudly the secret password and pass the sentries without inconvenience. This is so because its use is in its sound and not in understanding it.

Based on what was said above, all mantras are unexplainable, nor should they be explained. Since someone might still want to know its details, then I

have no other option but to give a brief explanation according to the meaning of the words within it.

Jiedi 揭諦 (*gate*) means to go (over) and ‘to save’ in Chinese, it speaks to the profound capability of *prajñā* to ‘save/liberate’ (*du* 度) all living beings and make them ‘cross over’ (*qu* 去) to the other shore. Repeating the word *jiedi* twice means that after self-liberation one is then capable of saving others. *Boluo jiedi* 波羅揭諦, in Chinese the word speaks about the *pāramitā* of reaching the other shore, denoting the meaning of ‘crossing over to the other shore [of enlightenment].’ *Boluoseng jiedi* 波羅僧揭諦, *seng* 僧 denotes a crowd of people, it describes the hope that a great ‘crowd’ (*zhong* 眾) together ‘cross over to the other shore of enlightenment.’ *Puti* 菩提 is the supreme fruit of *buddha*-hood as already described above. *Suopohe* 娑婆訶 speaks about quick accomplishment. If we regard the text of the mantra in the adjusted sequence, then joined together into one consistent sentence, it is:

May one attain the ‘liberation’ of ‘passage [to the other shore]’ relying on *prajñā* (*jiedi* 揭諦).

May one attain the liberation of passage relying on *prajñā* (*jiedi* 揭諦).

May one ‘cross over to the other shore’ (*boluo jiedi* 波羅揭諦).

May ‘the masses’ all ‘cross over to the other shore’ (*boluoseng jiedi* 波羅僧揭諦).

‘Quickly’ may the ‘accomplishment’ of the supreme *bodhi* of the Buddha (*puti suopohe* 菩提娑婆訶) arrive.

Furthermore, aside from being translated as ‘may the accomplishment arrive swiftly,’ the words *suopohe* 娑婆訶 can also be translated as [let the] ‘ceasing of calamities increase,’ while it can also be translated as ‘to complete.’ Once we have crossed to the other shore, then all ‘calamities’ (*zai* 災) of birth and death can ‘cease’ (*xi* 息) and a measureless increase of merit and wisdom can take place. When we have reached the other shore, we can ‘complete’ the attainment of *buddha*-hood.

The words of the mantra can also be interpreted as *jie* 揭 meaning ‘make go’ (*qu* 去) and *di* 諦 meaning the ‘true’ (*zhenshi* 真實). What this means is that, if we practise in accordance with *prajñā*, we are able to ‘make go’ (*qu*) all inverted beliefs and dreamlike illusions and realise the ‘true’ (*zhen* 真) emptiness of ‘real’ (*shi* 實) nature. The mantra, therefore, says *jiedi* 揭諦. If we want to attain the happiness of reaching the other shore (*boluo* 波羅) of *nirvāṇa*, we must namely ‘get rid of’ (*qu* 去, that is *jie* 揭) all inverted beliefs and dreamlike illusions and realise the genuine emptiness of the true nature of things (*di* 諦). Only in this way will we be able to attain our goal. The mantra, therefore, says *boluo jiedi* 波羅揭諦. But we do not want only one or two people to reach the peaceful homeland of ‘the other shore’ (*bi'an* 彼岸, *pāramitā*) but instead hope that all sentient beings (*seng* 僧) can unite and enter the other shore together. It is therefore said *boluoseng jiedi* 波羅僧揭諦. Since by practising contemplation relying on superior and wonderful *prajñā* one is able to accomplish the awakening of *bodhi* (*puti* 菩提), wishing that, in turn, everyone will immediately (*suopohe* 娑婆訶) establish an aspiration to achieve supreme *bodhi*. The mantra therefore says *puti suopohe* 菩提娑婆訶 (when one is reciting this mantra, it seems as if one is uttering an incantation for inspiring the arising of *bodhi* or a verse for the transfer of merit).

These explanations are all given based on words as combined ideograms expressing the Dharma. Although we cannot say that [individual characters] have no meaning, they can only be used as a form of reference. If according to the original meaning of the mantra it is, however, better not to add explanations, then I hope that the reader will wholeheartedly recite the mantra without thinking. In this case, the mind and the mantra will be in perfect agreement, so that one will be able to amply obtain an abundance of the mysterious. If, however, one were to sink into reasoning, then one is bound to create residues of knowing by seeing.

If we take a look at these few sentences of the mantra, then it can reveal the profoundly sincere mind of compassion of the *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* who strive to save living beings, taking care of everything these beings require [to

attain salvation], enlightening them layer upon layer, direct them towards the essence in every regard, so that [in the end] all of these living beings leave the sea of suffering as quickly as possible and reach the other shore (*pāramitā*). This is truly extremely compassionate and extremely beneficent. You see *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* being merciful like that, sympathising with all of us, as we sink into unfathomable vexations. Their sympathy makes them sincerely and patiently advise us in the great aspiration that we will all soon be able to turn around and attain the other shore together. For this reason, after giving a meticulous exposition of the exoteric teaching, [the *sūtra*] further helpfully declares this kind of concise and easily adoptable superior and subtle mantra to usher us [to the other shore]. Such emotions as expecting the return of one's absent children with this kind of profound love and generous friendship are profoundly deep. Personally, I would not be ashamed by possessing even a ten thousandth part of such emotion. If after that, as before, one is still infatuated with old delusions one does not even remember, one is still not willing to devote oneself to the pursuit of supreme enlightenment and muster the courage to forge ahead vigorously — liberate oneself relying on *prajñā* and realise awakening — then would one not unavoidably fail to live up to a piece of earnest and well-meaning advice given by the *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*?

The reason the title of this *Heart of the perfection of wisdom-sūtra* mentions the 'heart-[mind]' (*xin* 心)²⁵⁸ is that it clearly wants people to attain the awakening of the true mind (*xin* 心) by relying on *prajñā*. It first expounds the various kinds of emptiness, which serves as the exoteric teaching on *prajñā*, intended to destroy our clinging to the mind. In turn it then also relays the summarising mantra, which serves as the esoteric exposition of *prajñā*, intended to eliminate obstructions within our minds. Because I create mental attachments to all kinds of *dharmas*, the word here is about the attachments of the mind (*xin*). Because I am pestered by and harassed by various kinds of mental afflictions, this is about obstructions in the mind. Due to these, the inherently possessed true mind would be forever buried and unseen and I

²⁵⁸ In Chinese *xin* 心 denotes both 'heart' and 'mind,' which is why in the text of this commentary as well as the *sūtra* itself, it is used to mean both the 'mind' (*citta*) and the 'heart,' for example the word *hṛdaya* in the title of the *sūtra*.

would be experiencing birth and death in vain. But owing to the meritorious action of esoteric and exoteric *prajñā* which I am now able to wield, attachments are destroyed, and obstructions eliminated. This naturally causes my true mind to be seen, which suddenly removes all mental afflictions, forever ending the cycle of birth and death, and allows me finally to attain *buddha*-hood. Thus, liberation from all suffering is made real and I can keep far away from inverted beliefs and dreamlike illusions. This is the greatest intention of cultivation and realisation of this *sūtra*.

Furthermore, one ought to know that *sūtra* and mantra are originally of the same substance, and whether exoteric or esoteric, they do not differ essentially in what they can deliver. This is what is meant by the exoteric being the esoteric, and esoteric being what is exoteric. *Sūtra* is mantra, and mantra is *sūtra*. It is the exoteric mantra, and mantra is the esoteric *sūtra*. Exoteric doctrine possesses the benefits of the esoteric mantra, while an esoteric mantra also presents the subtle meaning of the esoteric teachings. From this it follows that the entire subtle meaning of a *sūtra* is encapsulated within this mantra, and that the entire mantra's esoteric benefits are also completely included within the text of this exoteric teaching. If the exoteric relies on understanding with wisdom, the esoteric practice is used as an entrance into meditation (*ding* 定).²⁵⁹ The Dharma-gate of cultivation of all *buddhas* is subsumed fully under the twin headings of meditation and wisdom. If one is thus capable of combining both the esoteric and exoteric in one's cultivation, meditation and wisdom will be perfected to the utmost, so that finally one will enter a state of great bliss. Even if we adopt one kind after another, we will also be able to attain the inconceivable benefits of *prajñā*. By the so-called concurrent adoption, we are then able to perfect a dual beauty, while by single adoption we can completely absorb both of them. It is thus undoubtedly known that exoteric utterances and esoteric mantras all lead back to the ultimate truth (*paramārtha*). This is a remarkable thing indeed. For the merits of *prajñā*, either exoteric or esoteric, are beyond imagination. I hope that we will all be inspired by it.

²⁵⁹ Originally, the character *ding* 定 denotes 'fixed attention.'

In this place, there is no need to give a synthetic explanation of the incantation of the mantra. Here ends part C4 about the text of the mantra (part B2 on the esoteric teaching of *prajñā* is hereby also completed).

Conclusion

All the *buddhas* of this world have emerged here as the causes and conditions of a great event — that is, to deliver all living beings and make them return for good to the state of perfect enlightenment (*sambodhi*) — while the first step of their undertaking of saving the masses resides in expounding the Dharma. But because the fundamental abilities of all living beings differ from each other in their quickness or slowness, and because they differ in the greatness of their mental capacity, when the Buddha first established the teaching related to saving beings, he devised it to have a special plan and shape. Thus, at the level of argumentation about principles there is a difference between what is expedient and what is ultimately true (*quan-shi* 權實). While the ultimately true (*shi*) aspect speaks directly about the teaching of the One Vehicle (*yishengfa* — 乘法) the expedient distinguishes between the teachings of the Three Vehicles. Regarding method, there exists the difference between the exoteric and the esoteric. While the exoteric explains the principles to inform people's practice, the esoteric is not concerned with explanations, but directly teaches a mantra which is to be recited. Aside from that, both the exoteric as well as the esoteric have their own unfathomable merits, the exoteric and esoteric can both make the practitioner obtain various kinds of benefits, down to the attainment of *buddha*-hood. Dependent only on the depth or shallowness of meritorious deeds, the thereby realised fruits can differ from one another. In the linguistic aspect there exists the difference between comprehensiveness and brevity. Its brevity consists of pointing out essential points — a summarised explanation of the general ideas, allowing those who possess natural powers of intelligence to comprehend [the principles] by hearing [their explanation] once, without spending excessive energy. Comprehensiveness is a detailed narration of specific items — explanation by discrimination, intended to make less intelligent people enter the gate from different sides, and be unlikely to miss the way. These are all different strategies used by the Buddha to protect and transform all living beings, which can be called the most refined and most meticulous as well as extremely skilful.

Given that the expedient and the ultimately true are both applied together, then one will be able to perfect universal salvation, put to use both the exoteric as well as the esoteric and derive benefits according to the situation. If we are able to narrate both the comprehensive and the brief, then one is naturally able to make both the intelligent and the obtuse profit at the same time. The content of the present *sūtra* completely fulfils all these conditions. Now, to make a conclusion, we shall once more give a summary of the entire *sūtra*, pointing out essential points.

The content of this *sūtra* is in two major sections, that is, an exoteric explanation of *prajñā* and an esoteric exposition of *prajñā*. The text starting with the words *Guanzizai* 觀自在 and concluding with *sanmiaosan puti* 三藐三菩提 is the exoteric explication of *prajñā*. From the words *gu zhi bore* 故知般若 down to the words *puti suopohe* 菩提娑婆訶 is the esoteric explication of *prajñā*. The text of exoteric explanation:

(1) From *Guanzizai* 觀自在 to *du yiqie ku'e* 度一切苦厄 gives a general description of the state of attainment of a *bodhisattva*, in which ‘*Guanzizai*’ elucidates the person who is the subject of observation — the practitioner. The words ‘practising profound *prajñā*’ explain the object of cultivation — the Dharma-gate. The sentence ‘seeing clearly that the five aggregates are all empty’ (*zhao jian yun kong* 照見蘊空) elucidates the observed conditions of the external world — realising the nature of the external world. The words ‘delivered from all suffering’ elucidate the benefits attained — the results of cultivation (the sentence on ‘practising the profound’ speaks about the effort of cultivation — self-improving — and thus belongs to the causes. The two sentences on profoundly seeing that all aggregates are empty and being delivered from all suffering speak about the merits realised — improving others — and thus belongs to the effects (results).

(2) The text from *Shelizi se bu yi kong* 舍利子色不異空 to *sanmiaosan puti* 三藐三菩提 serves as a detailed explanation of the *prajñā* of the genuine emptiness of reality, where the part from *se bu yi kong* 色不異空 to *ai xiang xing shi yifu rushi* 愛想行識亦復如是

is the text devoted to extinguishing attachments. The sentences *Shelizi shi zhufa kongxiang, busheng bumie... buzeng bujian* 舍利子是諸法空相，不生不滅...不增不減 reveal inherent nature (*xianxing* 顯性). The sentences *shigu kong zhong wuse... wuzhi yi wude* 是故空中無色...無智亦無得 is the section of the text which speaks about the destruction of delusions, where the part saying

nonmateriality, where there is no sensing, perceiving, acting, and cognising ... since there is no visual realm, nor is there a realm of consciousness

speaks about destruction of sentient beings' notion of self, whereas the part saying

no ignorance ... no suffering, accumulation, cessation, and path

is about the destruction of the notion of Dharma of the Two Vehicles (that there is no ignorance is about destroying the Dharma of *pratyekabuddhas*, that there is no suffering, accumulation, cessation and path is about destroying the Dharma of the *śrāvakas*). That

there is no wisdom nor attainment

is about destroying the expedient doctrine of the notion of the Dharma of the *bodhisattva*.

Because there is nothing to attain ... awakening' (*yi wu suode gu... sanmiaosan puti* 以無所得故...三藐三菩提)

is the part of the text which speaks about the fruits of attainment — a *bodhisattva* relies on *prajñā* ... complete enlightenment, this explains cutting off the fruits of *bodhisattva*-hood. And all *buddhas* of the three times rely on *prajñā* ... perfect awakening (*sanshi zhu fo yi bore... sanmiaosan puti* 三世諸佛依般若...三藐三菩提), explains how all *buddhas* attain the fruits of wisdom.

This is the exoteric teaching of *prajñā*.

Secondly, 'therefore known as ... unequalled mantra' (*gu zhi bore... shi wudengdengzhou* 故知般若...是無等等咒) is a preliminary indication of referring to it and the benefits of its invocation. The part saying:

Speak, therefore, the perfection of wisdom mantra. Recite the mantra in this way:

Gate, gate, pāragate, pārasaṃgate, bodhi svāhā!

is the text of the mantra. This is the esoteric teaching of *prajñā*.

Furthermore, 'materiality differs not from emptiness' (*se bu yi kong* 色不異空) and the other four sentences constitute the brief exposition on *prajñā*, while the part of the text from 'therefore, the core of emptiness is nonmateriality' to 'because there is nothing to attain' constitutes the comprehensive exposition about *prajñā*. The five aggregates, the twelve entrances, the four noble truths, and the twelve *nidāna* are expedient Dharma. Non-attainment, complete *nirvāṇa*, and *anuttarasamṃyaksambodhi* are the *dharma*s of ultimate reality. In sum, 'he saw clearly that the five aggregates are all empty' (*zhaojian yun kong* 照見蘊空) is the exoteric truth about breaking illusions, which briefly elucidates the state of a *bodhisattva*'s profound practice of perfection of *prajñā*. From 'materiality differs not from emptiness' to 'there is no wisdom and no attainment' (*wuzhi wude* 無智無得) is the very truth of awakening to illusions, which comprehensively expounds the *prajñā* of the real meaning of true emptiness. The sentence 'because there is nothing to attain' (*yi wu suo de* 以無所得) is a conclusion to the capabilities of *prajñā* and the state of the true nature of things. The sentences, which open with 'relying on the *prajñā paramita*,' explain how all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* attain liberation and accomplish supreme *bodhi* by relying on *prajñā*. The above explicitly relay this *sūtra*'s distinguished and excellent characteristics, the parts that speak about relying on *prajñā* belong to the practical aspect, the parts which speak about the unimpeded mind, and about the ability to keep far away from inverted beliefs and dreamlike illusions belong to the aspect of eliminating illusions; ultimate *nirvāṇa* and *anuttarasamṃyaksambodhi* belong to the aspect of realising the fruits of cultivating the path.

Last but not least, if we observe this *sūtra* in the light of its written form and language, then, at the start it still does not contain an introduction — no foreword and no summarising part at the very end — no conclusion. If we look at this from a pragmatic, methodological point of view, then it would

do no harm to consider the first few sentences ‘when the *bodhisattva* Guanyin ... was thus delivered from all suffering’ as the ‘introductory part’ (*xufen* 序分) of the *sūtra*, because these few sentences were added by the compiler of the *sūtra* to narrate the *bodhisattva*’s contemplative efforts, and thus serve as a narrative introduction. The sentences between ‘therefore, it is known that this is the great inspiring mantra’ and ‘*bodhi svāhā!*’ can take the place of the ‘summarising part’ of the *sūtra* (*liutongfen* 流通分), because this paragraph very well combines the exoteric and esoteric aspects. The first sentence, on the other hand, concludes with praising the meritorious functions of *prajñā*. Are you ready for the one who has attained awakening before you to give you instructions?

The Five-sectioned interpretation [the five categories of profound meaning]²⁶⁰

What is the reason that, when we are explaining the *sūtra*, we must first explain its title? It is that the title epitomises the entire *sūtra*, while the entire text of the *sūtra* constitutes a broader paraphrase of the title. If one understands the *sūtra*’s title, then one will also find it easy to understand the entire *sūtra*, which is why we must first explain the title. If we use a metaphor, it is as a net upheld by its key links, the title manifests all the key points of the entire *sūtra*, and like the collar on a shirt is able to stand up, the numerous threads must also all be aligned in order.²⁶¹ Explaining the title first is the same thing.

²⁶⁰ The full Chinese name is *Fahua wuzhong xuanyi* 法華五重玄義 ‘the five categories of profound meaning according to the Fahua.’ This is a standardized fivefold collection of interpretative tools devised by the Tiantai patriarch Zhiyi.

²⁶¹ This is a relatively difficult metaphor, which Binzong used already in the opening sections of his commentary. What Binzong is trying to convey to the reader is the image of how different threads of reasoning must be aligned in an order similar to the threads in a net or in the fabric of a textile. Only if they are arranged in a proper order, can the net or the fabric obtain the ‘form’ and thus also serve its purpose. With the first metaphor, he indicates that there can be no proper net without its key links, where the threads overlap,

When it comes to the method of explaining the title, the first amongst the sages (*Xianshou* 賢首, [another name for Fazang]) used ten gates to introducing Buddhist texts:

- (1) Motivations and causes for initiating the teachings (*jiaoqi yinyuan* 教起因緣);
- (2) Placement within the Tripitaka (*Zangjiao suo she* 藏教所攝);
- (3) Differences of argumentation (*yili fenqi* 義理分齊);
- (4) Structure of the teaching accommodated to different skills (*jiao suo beiji* 教所被機);
- (5) The depth of the substance of the teaching (*jiaoti qianshen* 教體淺深);
- (6) Universality and particularity of doctrinal tenets (*zongqu tongju* 宗趣通局);
- (7) Organization of divisions and parts (*bulei chuhui* 部類處會);
- (8) Time of translation;
- (9) Comprehensive interpretation of the *sūtra*'s title (*zong shi jingti* 總釋經題);
- (10) Specific explanation of the meaning of the text (*bieshi wenyi* 別釋文義).

and that only when all warp and weft overlap in proper array can the fabric of the textile serve its purpose and obtain an upright form. Both metaphors speak about the relationship between the main and secondary propositions in a well-ordered theory or teaching. When such system is designed following a proper order, the main axiom is consistent with all the remaining propositions. Now, when it comes to Chinese Buddhism, it is important to realize that the idea of 'pattern' (*li* 理) plays a pivotal role in imagining the structure of reasoning, which is thus thought to follow the principle of analogical extension, in which the standard of consistency consists in the core pattern being repeatedly reflected in all segments of the fabric. In other words, the title of the *sūtra* already embodies the main pattern, which is only extended within its text. Finally, if it were compared to a net or a fabric made out of threads, then the key elements making up such a pattern would be the points, at which the warp and weft overlap, and the consistent manner of their overlapping throughout the entire fabric. One can thus recognize the structure of the entire 'shirt' by looking only at one such key knot or link. In the context of the Tiantai method of scriptural exegesis, this knot or link is the title of the *sūtra*.

This is Fazang's method for interpreting *sūtras*. The Tiantai school, on the other hand, employs the method of five-sectioned interpretation, which further divides the *sūtra*'s content into general and specific (*tong-bie* 通別). The general kind consists of the seven common steps of explanation (*qipan gongjie* 七番共解), while the specific aspect consists of the separate interpretation in five categories (*wuzhong geshi* 五種各釋). Of these, the seven common steps are the following:

- (1) Explanation of the sections (*biao zhang* 標章) — that is the parts of the text, explaining its chapters and sections. Such as, for example, explaining the five categories, their layered structures, so that the reader might find it more convenient to remember and recollect.
- (2) Arising (*shengqi* 生起) — such as, the sequence of five categories as arisen from their mutual engendering. All explanations of sections and parts must arise following a definite order, so as not to cause disorder and enabling one to retain focus on the content.
- (3) Citing in evidence (*yinzheng* 引證) — all expressions of opinion, if we want to make people trust them, we ought to use quotations from the original texts of *sūtras* or teachings by the ancients, all in order to demonstrate that what we claim is not erroneous and encourage other's confidence.
- (4) Observing the mind (*guanxin* 觀心) — because all Dharmas expounded by the Buddha did not depart from all minds, therefore in listening to the Dharma we need to know the gist of each sentence. For example, in the case discussed here, the *Heart of perfection of wisdom sūtra*, the word *prajñā* (*bore* 般若) is translated as wisdom, and wisdom is what is opposed to ignorance. Wisdom is awakening (*jue* 覺), ignorance is delusion. Awakening is the Buddha. The Buddha is not exterior, but manifests in the true mind (*zhenxin* 真心) of intrinsic awakening in one thought. This mind is not overshadowed by this-worldly sense objects and desires, it is not moved by the border realms, and its actual substance is clearly understood. The wisdom of this principle of awakening is *prajñā* — the *prajñā* of the true nature of things — the self-nature of the natural truth of *buddha*-hood — the true mind of intrinsic awakening. Other

pāramitās can be known after the same example. This constitutes explaining words (*ming*) by observing the mind. For example, fathoming the true nature of things is observing the mind of substance (*ti* 體) and cultivating the causes to realise the [rewards] of attainment is cultivating the mind of purpose (*zong* 宗). Removing delusions to realise the truth is observing the mind of function (*yong* 用). Distinguishing depth and size is observing the mind of doctrine (*jiao* 教). Therefore, the reason why we must understand the observation of mind is because we want to guarantee that people understand what they hear, to make them give rise to the mind of diligence and perseverance.

- (5) Explanations (*liaojian* 料簡) — that is, questions and answers, these can resolve people's doubts, which is described as when doubts are defeated, darkness is dispelled, and the mind of wisdom shines forth brightly. By doing so, we thus make people give rise to the mind of wisdom.
- (6) Revealing and assembling (*kaihe* 開合, opening and closing) — that is to say, revealing as extending (opening up) and assembling as narrowing down (closing), in order to suit the quickness or slowness of the individual innate properties of sentient beings. As the present *sūtra* elucidates, if a sentient being has a confused mind, then one assembles (closes) form and reveals (opens) the mind, such is for example the case with the five aggregates. If a sentient being is confused about form, then we reveal (open) materiality and assemble (close) the mind, such are, for example, the twelve sense bases. If, however, one is confused both about the mind and form, then both mind and form require revealing (opening), such are, for instance, the 18 elements. If one is confused neither in relation to form nor mind, then mind and materiality need not be revealed. Because we want all beings to benefit according to their situation, therefore, with revealing (opening) or assembling (closing), with instructing broadly or narrowly, we enable [the teaching] to suit their respective situations. Which is also causing the practitioner to give rise to the mind of wisdom.

- (7) Understanding and separating (*huiyi* 會異) — this is about understanding thoroughly and distinguishing names, making one correctly understand that ‘convenient means have many gates, which return to the origin by path of nonduality,’ with the aim of strengthening one’s confidence and causing one’s mind of wisdom to arise.

It ought to be known that these seven common steps of explanation possess the five minds, which allow people to give rise to faith (*xin* 信), perseverance (*jìn* 進), mindfulness (*nian* 念), meditation (*dìng* 定), and wisdom (*hui* 慧) and create their five roots and five powers, in order to destroy the five obstacles. Faith destroys the obstacle of doubt, perseverance destroys the obstacle of laziness, mindfulness destroys the obstacle of delusion, meditation destroys the obstacle of disorder, and wisdom destroys the obstacle of ignorance. To cultivate the seven branches of awakening (perception of what is false, zeal, joy, renunciation, transcendence, truth, and remembrance), to walk the noble eightfold path (right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration), and enter the three gates of liberation (empty, without an appearance, and without desire). In this way, even the dull-sensed can realise the fruit of *arhat*-ship, and the adherents of the Mahāyāna can realise supreme *bodhi*. Explaining the title using the seven common steps of explanation is very meaningful.

The second is the five-sectioned interpretation, namely using the five categories of profound meaning to explain the title of the *sūtra*. Now, even if we rely on the Tiantai rules of exegesis, we should discard what is complex and adopt what is simple for the convenience of the beginning student. Therefore, we shall not use the seven common steps and adopt merely the explanation in five individual categories. Now, what exactly are the five categories of profound meaning?:

- (1) explaining the title (*shiming* 釋名)
- (2) displaying the main theme (*xianti* 顯體)²⁶²

²⁶² Binzong uses a synonym for the usual *bianti* 辯體 ‘discernment of the main theme.’

(3) elucidation of main tenets (*mingzong* 明宗)

(4) discussing purpose (*lunyong* 論用)²⁶³ and

(5) classifying the teaching (*panjiao* 判教)²⁶⁴

What is subtle and difficult to see is called ‘profound’ (*xuan* 玄), and the reason why it is deep is called ‘meaning’ (*yi* 義). When we are using this kind of explanation of the title in five categories, we need beforehand to elaborate what within a *sūtra* is subtle and difficult to understand, the principles which make it so profound. So that before explaining the *sūtra*, one should first read its title so as to learn its main idea. We therefore speak about explaining the profound meaning using the five categories.

Because one *sūtra* has one name, and one treatise has one name, all renditions of *sūtras* and treatises must first give their names. In particular, it means understanding true substance (truth) through provisional names. What is meant by so-called true substance must make use of provisional names in order to be conveyed, which is why, after explaining the name, one must, in turn, also reveal the substance (*ti* 體) or content. Once the substance is known, starting from this point we unveil the cultivation (tenets), which is called establishing practice in accordance with the truth. Therefore, after revealing the substance, we must understand the doctrinal tenets and their use in actual practice, which is referred to as realising fruits through cultivating causes. After having elucidated the main tenets, in turn, we also need to discuss their practical purpose (*yong* 用). Adjudicating the *sūtra* through the depth of its practical meritorious deeds, the superiority of application is what is called classifying ideas into expedient and ultimately true, and their depth. It is namely that the *sūtras* differ in greatness and superiority of purpose. Therefore, after discussing its purpose, we also ought to classify the teaching. Let us give an example of such reasoning: if we want to befriend someone, the first step is to learn their name (*shiming* 釋名); next, we need to know their appearance (*xianti* 顯體); thirdly, we need to know their personal

²⁶³ The term *lun yong* 論用 could also be translated as ‘discussing the function.’ Similarly, we could also refer to the layer called *xianti* 顯體 as ‘displaying the substance.’

²⁶⁴ More precisely, the term *panjiao* 判教 means ‘adjudication of the *sūtra*’s position in a hermeneutical taxonomy of the scriptures’ (see Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 290).

characteristics (*ming zong* 明宗); fourthly, we need to learn their talents (*lun yong* 論用), and, lastly, we also need to know their personality type (*panjiao* 判教). If we proceed in this way, we will not make acquaintances indiscriminately. Using the method of five categories to interpret the *sūtras* and their titles is like that.

- (1) Explaining the title (*shiming* 釋名), *shi* 釋 means to explain and *ming* 名 means name. This means explaining the *sūtra*'s name (*mingmu* 名目); when the ancients were explaining classics and treatises, they used to apply the method of seven categories of naming (*liming* 立名). Which seven categories were these?:

- (i) only human (*dan ren* 單人)
- (ii) individual *dharma*s (*dan fa* 單法)
- (iii) individual metaphors (*dan yu* 單喻 [analogy])
- (iv) human and *dharma* (*ren fa* 人法)
- (v) human and metaphor (*ren yu* 人喻)
- (vi) *Dharma* and metaphor (*fa yu* 法喻), and
- (vii) human, *dharma*, and metaphor (*ren fa yu* 人法喻); where the 'human' includes individual of the causal stage (*yinren* 因人) and realizers (*guoren* 果人); '*dharma*' includes *dharma*s of cultivation (*xiufa* 修法) and *dharma*s of inherent nature (*xingfa* 性法); and 'metaphors' include partial and complete metaphors.

1. Naming only a human individual — such as, in the case of the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra*, or the *Amitabha-sūtra* etc. *Vimalakīrti* was a human, who cultivated the path at the causative stage of existence, which is why he was a *yinren* 因人 (causal individual). The *Amitābha-sūtra* (*Foshuo Amituo-jing* 佛說阿彌陀經) — the character *fo* 佛 at the beginning of the title represents the name representing the subject and refers to the original Master, the Buddha Śākyamuni, while the name given

afterwards, Amitābha (Amituo 阿彌陀) is the person, who is being talked about, namely the founder of the paradise (*lebang* 樂邦). Both are figures from the realm of results (*guoshang* 果上), and hence so-called *guoren* 果人 (realizers). The title of the *sūtra* contains no *dharma* and no metaphors.

2. Naming individual *Dharmas* — such as the *Sūtra of perfect enlightenment* (*Yuanjue jing* 圓覺經) or the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* (*Niepan jing* 涅槃經). ‘Perfect enlightenment’ and *nirvāṇa* are both *Dharmas* of cultivation and attaining *buddha*-hood; herein there is no mention of persons and metaphors.
3. Naming individual metaphors — such as the *Cloud of jewels-sūtra* (*Baoyun jing* 寶雲經, *Ratnamegha-sūtra*) and the *Brahma net-sūtra* (*Fanwang jing* 梵網經, *Brahmajāla-sūtra*; the *sūtra* speaks about the time in which the World Honoured One meditated on the net created out of seven jewels by lord Brahma, which is why it presents immeasurable worlds as being similar to a network or mesh, explaining the differences between every single world in an extensive manner, like the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* and so on. ‘Cloud of jewels’ and ‘Brahma’s net’ are two metaphors. Thus, in these cases, the title of the *sūtra* mentions no persons and no *dharmas*.
4. Naming humans and *dharmas* — such as the *Mañjuśrī inquires about prajñā-sūtra* (*Wenshu wen bore jing* 文殊問般若經) and the *Virtues of the medicine Buddha-sūtra* (*Yaoshi Rulain gongde jing* 藥師如來功德經) etc. Mañjuśrī and the Medicine Buddha are two persons and *prajñā* and ‘virtues’ belong to the *dharmas*. In this way, such titles contain no analogies.
5. Names combining humans and metaphors — such as, the *Tathāgata lion’s roar-sūtra* (*Rulai shizihou jing* 如來獅子吼經), the *Bodhisattva pearl necklace-sūtra* (*Pusa yingluo jing* 菩薩瓔珞經). ‘Tathāgata’ is one of the ten names of the Buddha and thus a person (realizer), while the ‘lion’s roar’ is a metaphor (when the lion, the king of animals, roars all animals scatter and hide), similarly, the Buddha is the king of *dharmas* and when he

fearlessly expounds the Dharma, the ten realms obey in unison; therefore, the lion's roar is a metaphor for the Tathāgata's teaching of the Dharma. Furthermore, a *bodhisattva* is a person (an individual at the causal stage) and the 'pearl necklace' is a metaphor. These kinds of titles contain no *dharma*s.

6. Naming *dharma*s and metaphors — such are, for example, the *Miraculous dharma of the lotus-sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經) and the *Diamond-cleaver prajñā [pāramitā]-sūtra* (*Jingang bore jing* 金剛般若經) etc. While 'miraculous *dharma*' and *prajñā* are things, the 'lotus' and 'diamond cleaver' are metaphors. These titles of *sūtras* contain no human names.
7. Combining names of humans, *dharma*s, and metaphors — such are, for example, the *Great vast Buddha of the flower garland-sūtra* (*Dafangguang Fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經). 'Great vast' is a characteristic, the '*buddha*' is the person of realisation (*guoren*), and 'flower garland' is a metaphor (because a *buddha*'s practice is subtle and wondrous like a grand garland of jewelled flowers adorning the One Vehicle of attaining *buddha*-hood). Moreover, there is also *The Buddha's teaching on the rain of jewels dhāraṇī-sūtra* (*Foshuo yubao tuoluoni jing* 佛說雨寶陀羅尼經), where the '*buddha*' is a human, 'rain of jewels' is a metaphor, and *dhāraṇī* is the Dharma. Since the title combines all three of them we say that it names humans, *Dharma*s, and metaphors (*ren fa yu liming* 人法喻立名).

Although Buddhist *sūtras* are numerous, comprising tens of thousands of volumes, their titles are all covered by the above seven categories of naming.

The question which remains is, what kind of a name was given to the *Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* being discussed here? The title consists of the following: *prajñā* is a form of *dharma* and *pāramitā* is a metaphor ([reaching the other shore]). Hence, we can see that the title contains no mention of humans, nor is it named in the manner of 'human and Dharma,' 'human and metaphor' or 'human, Dharma, and metaphor.'

Therefore, it belongs into the category of naming by means of listing ‘Dharma and metaphor’ (*fa yu* 法喻).

1.	Only human <i>Dan ren</i> 單人	—	<i>Amitābha-sūtra,</i> <i>Vimalakīrti-sūtra</i>
2.	Only Dharma <i>Dan fa</i> 單法	—	<i>Sūtra of perfect enlightenment,</i> <i>Nirvāṇa-sūtra</i>
3.	Only metaphor <i>Dan yu</i> 單喻	—	<i>Cloud of jewels-sūtra, Brahma</i> <i>net-sūtra</i>
4.	Human and Dharma <i>Ren fa</i> 人法	—	<i>Mañjuśrī inquires about prajñā-</i> <i>sūtra, Virtues of the medicine</i> <i>Buddha-sūtra</i>
5.	Dharma and metaphor <i>Fa ren</i> 法喻	—	<i>Tathāgata lion's roar-sūtra,</i> <i>Bodhisattva pearl necklace-sūtra</i>
6.	Human and metaphor <i>Ren yu</i> 人喻	—	<i>Miraculous Dharma of the lotus-</i> <i>sūtra, Diamond-cleaver prajñā</i> <i>[pāramitā]-sūtra</i>
7.	Human, Dharma, and metaphor <i>Ren fa yu</i> 人法喻	—	<i>Great vast buddha of the flower</i> <i>garland-sūtra, The Buddha's</i> <i>teaching on the rain of jewels</i> <i>dhāraṇī-sūtra</i>

TABLE 10: SEVEN CATEGORIES OF TITLING SŪTRAS

End of first category, *explaining the title*.

- (2) Displaying the main theme (*xian ti* 顯體), *xian* 顯 is illustrating or displaying, and *ti* 體 is essence (*xingti* 性體) — truth — that is to display the truth of the *sūtra*. The preceding explanation of the name of the *sūtra*, which used provisional names akin to temporary visiting guests, represents the subject of exegesis; the present stage of displaying the substance, on the other hand, is the true meaning, akin to the host of the guests, which represents the subject of

exegesis. A *sūtra*'s title is like a person's name and surname, while the true meaning of a *sūtra* is like a person's body. If a *sūtra* had no body, then it would be inconsistent with the Buddha's teaching, while being mistaken or traceless, it could not be passed on to later generations. This would be like humans only having names and no bodies, so that we would not know how to point at Tom, Dick, or Harry. This would be as nonsensical as a turtle's hair or a rabbit's horn. It must be borne in mind that the text in a *sūtra* is nothing else but a convenient means of using language, the aim of which consists in attaining the essence by following the names. This is identical to the meaning of 'catching fish using a fish trap' and 'seeing the moon by following the finger.' If we pursue only names and confuse their substance, then even if we had read the entire canon of the Three Baskets, being meticulous about every word and punctuation mark, that will not enable us to benefit from its truth. Thus, one resembles a mouse gnawing fresh ginger — not being able to obtain any benefits from it. Consequently, after explaining the name, we must reveal the substance. All *sūtras* and treatises can be divided into the Two Vehicles of Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna. The common saying goes that the substance (content) of the Lesser Vehicle are the three Dharma seals (*sanfayin* 三法印, *dharmamudrā*) and the substance of the Major Vehicle is the one Dharma seal (*yifayin* 一法印), or it might also be said that its substance is the true nature of things. This is a very broad manner of speaking, but based on actual research, we can find that each and every volume of *sūtra* or treatise possesses a unique substance of principles. For example, the substance of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* is the Dharma Realm of One Truth (*yizhen fajie* 一真法界), the substance of the *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* is the subtle nature of the true *thusness* of the *tathāgatagarbha*, and the substance of the *Amitābha-sūtra* is the four virtues of eternity, bliss, self and purity. That being the case, then what is the substance of the present *sūtra*? Its substance is unsurpassed emptiness, for the meaning of the words 'there is no attainment' spoken about by this *sūtra* are unsurpassed emptiness. We could also say that its substance is true nature, for the *sūtra* says: 'this is the inherent emptiness of all *dharmas*.'

Here ends part two on *displaying the substance*.

- (3) Explaining the tenets (*ming zong* 明宗), *ming* 明 means understanding, and *zong* 宗 means tenets, that is understanding the tenets of a *sūtra*. That is also to say, the purported destination (*zongqu* 宗趣) in doctrine — *ming* is understanding, and *zong* is the purpose which surpasses the language and where the purposes take us is called the destination, that is the final destination of interest, understanding the key points of the content (substance). For exactly this reason, without the purpose we cannot understand the substance, and without substance we cannot establish the purpose; this is why, if we want to understand the correct substance, we must understand the purpose. If a practitioner does not know the purpose and the destination, then their undertaking will have no final aim. Then, how will we be able to understand incomprehensible subtle substance? This is why we have to know the purpose and the final aim. Since displaying the substance enables the practitioner to comprehend the principle, it belongs to the virtues of nature; while the present understanding of the purpose enables one to give rise to cultivation, and thus belongs to the virtues of cultivation. The virtue of inner nature is grasped by nature (*tian* 天) and thus commonly possessed by all humans. The virtues of cultivation require human effort and need to be mastered in practice. The principle referred to as giving rise to cultivation by relying on one's inner nature, and realising one's inner nature from cultivation, represents a natural way of attaining truth and reaping its practical benefits (*yong* 用). We shall now try to explain it by providing the following analogy: if rooms inside a house are a metaphor for the purpose and destination, and the empty space [within it] is a metaphor for substance, although the empty space 'fills' everything, we [still] need to build a house so that it can provide shelter from wind and rain, so that its inhabitants can store things within. If one has substance without purpose, this is like being unable to reside in peace, not even for a day, despite having at one's disposal a vast and extensive empty space. Therefore, after

manifesting the substance, we further need to explain its purpose. All *sūtras* and manuscripts, however, have their own particular purposes — such as, for example, the cause and effect of the One Vehicle in the *Lotus-sūtra*, prompting the rise of the *bodhi* mind in the *Diamond-sūtra*, and relying on the name [of Amitābha] in belief and hope as the purpose and final destination of the *Amitābha-sūtra*. But what exactly is the purpose and final destination of the *sūtra* discussed here? Its purpose is the ‘*prajñā* of contemplation,’ the *sūtra* speaks about the *bodhisattva*’s ‘seeing clearly that the five aggregates are all empty.’

Here ends part two on *explaining the tenets*.

- (4) Discussing the main purpose (*lun yong* 論用): displaying the essential points is called *lun* 論, that is discussing and explaining; *yong* 用 is the function (*gongyong* 功用) — the results of devotion to cultivation are called *gong* 功 and the benefits so obtained are called *yong* 用. It can also be interpreted as *liyong* 力用, where *li* 力 means ‘ability [to do]’ and ‘capacity [to experience],’ and *yong* 用 means ‘acting’ and ‘enjoying deeds.’ Both the ability [to do] and acting belong to the causal aspect of cultivation, while the capacity of experiencing and enjoying deeds belong to the results side of realising awakening. Also, as an ability *li* 力, extinguishing the harmful and evil belongs to eradicating delusions, while the function *yong* 用 generating good, belongs to the fruits of realisation. In brief, the results of cultivation can be spoken about in terms of generating effects and having practical functions. The present *sūtra* treats the *prajñā* of contemplation as the ‘meritorious effect’ (*gong* 功) of practice, while it aims at attaining the marvellous ‘function’ explained below. If the aforementioned purposes (*zong* 宗) constitute the method of understanding the substance, the function discussed now is the miraculous one of attaining the substance. Engaging in empty practice without such miraculous function has no benefit, regardless of how and who practises it. Therefore, after

explaining the purpose, we must also discuss the functions. Each *sūtra* and treatise possess their own particular miraculous function — the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, for example, has the function of breaking away from craving to attain liberation; the *Diamond-sūtra* has the function of reaching nonabiding mind; and the *Amitābha-sūtra* has the function of never regressing in the cycle of rebirth. In this case, what exactly is the function of this *sūtra*? It resides in the miraculous function of destroying the three illusions and eliminating the three hindrances and finally attaining *buddha*-hood. When the *sūtra* says

nonmateriality, where there is no sensing, ... there is even
no realm of consciousness

this aims to destroy an ordinary person's attachments to the illusory notion of materiality. When the *sūtra* says

since there is no ignorance, there is also no ending of
ignorance... no suffering, arising, cessation or the path

this is to destroy the Two Vehicles' clinging to the illusory notion of emptiness.

There is no wisdom and no attainment

is intended to break the expedient Vehicle of the *bodhisattva*'s clinging to the illusory notion of the two extremes of emptiness and the transitory. This is therefore called the eradication of the three illusions. Moreover, 'unimpeded mind' represents the cancellation of 'karmic hindrances' (*yezhang* 業障). The state of being 'without anxieties' is the cancellation of the 'hindrances of karmic retribution' (*baozhang* 報障), and 'keeping far away from inverted beliefs and dreamlike illusions' represents the cancellation of the 'hindrances of mental afflictions.' These are therefore called elimination of the three hindrances. Finally,

because all *buddhas* of the three periods of time rely on the
perfection of wisdom, they attain unsurpassed complete
perfect awakening

speaks about the final attainment of *buddha*-hood. Considering all of this, the present *sūtra*'s miraculous functions consist of destroying illusions, removing hindrances, and the final attainment of *buddha*-hood. So much is beyond any doubt. Here ends part four on discussing the purpose.

- (5) Classifying the teaching (*pan jiao* 判教), *pan* 判 means discriminating and *jiao* 教 means classification of the teaching. Together, the expression means to distinguish the class of teaching to which a *sūtra* belongs. The words and written texts containing the Buddha's instructions and guidance to sentient beings is called *jiao* 教 (teaching) and distinguishing the sequence and depth of teachings, which have come to be at a certain time is called *xiang* 相 (class).

The historical Buddha became enlightened (*chengdao* 成道) at the age of 30 and entered *nirvāṇa* at the age of 80. Between the moment he set out from the site of attainment until he completed his path in the Crane forest, he spent 49 years teaching the Dharma. In this period, he taught more than 300 *sūtras*, which were collected to form the 12-part canon of the *Three baskets* (*Tripiṭaka*). If we do not classify the teachings of these *sūtras* according to their display of the principles of great and lesser, expedient and ultimately true, sudden and gradual, partial and perfect, how can we know whether, for example, the *sūtra* being discussed is about sudden or gradual enlightenment, or whether it is expedient or ultimately true? Since we cannot indiscriminately confuse *sūtras*' main aims, we have to classify their teachings.

During his entire life, the Tathāgata taught the Dharma extensively. His exposition of the Dharma was relayed directly to the Great Master of Tiantai on the Vulture peak (Gṛdhrakūṭa). His marvellous awakening of the great arousing, [was conveyed to his students at different times and in different places], the classification of five periods and eight teachings is used to methodically arrange the Tathāgata's teaching over his entire lifetime. [The teachings'] discriminating interpretation is illustrious like the sun and moon, and exhaustive so as to not leave anything uncovered. The classification of the five periods and eight teachings serves as an overall outline and ordering of the Buddha's enlightening of sentient beings (the five periods represent its temporal sequence, and the eight teachings represent the actual sequence of teachings). In other words, the sequence of revisions of guidelines which

took place in the Buddha's lifetime of enlightening sentient beings, which in temporal aspect divides into five periods, while in regard to doctrine it is divided into eight teachings. We must know that no aspect of the Tathāgata's Dharma is without purpose, the teachings are adapted to conform to listeners' capacities. Because sentient beings' personal characters (personalities) vary greatly, therefore, the Tathāgata's teachings also cannot be the same. Just as with regard to time there is earlier and later, the teaching is [both] expedient and ultimately true. You may observe that 49 years of teaching the Dharma cannot be regarded as a short period of time, while the 12-part collection of the Three baskets cannot be considered as not extensive. If we do not systematise [all this teaching], we are truly unable to explore and understand the content — the stages of teaching of Dharma — and categories of meaning of the doctrine. The Venerable Master Zhiyi possessed original insight and exceptional skills to arrange the sequence of Dharma teachings of the entire generation, having strictly and accurately divided their content into five shared and distinct periods. At the same time, the Venerable Master also made detailed and apt discrimination between the two kinds of the four teachings (altogether eight teachings) regarding doctrinal tenets taught during the entire period. In this way, one first explains the five periods and subsequently also the eight teachings.

The five periods are a succession of periods within the 49 years following the Buddha's enlightenment, in which he taught the Dharma according to learners' aptitude. Because these can be divided into five consecutive times, they are called the five periods. But what exactly were the five periods? They have two dimensions, namely the 'common' (*tong* 通, general) and 'distinct' (*bie* 別, particular). The common dimension refers to the fact that the five periods can intercommunicate, while the distinct dimension speaks to the fact that they border each other. Here, we shall first speak about the particular five periods:

- (1) The *Avataṃsaka* (*Huayan* 華嚴) period: that is the period of the Buddha's exposition of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*, all practices receiving the fruits of merit of the One Vehicle adorned with a garland of flowers (*Huayan*). In the Jin Dynasty, 60 sections of the *sūtra* were translated, and in the Tang Dynasty 80 sections. [The

text] was taught in seven places and in eight assemblies. When the World Honoured One first attained enlightenment, he without hindrance developed a genuine teaching about the subtle principles of the *dharma* realm, which were reflected within the 10,000-foot long body of *Vairocana* Buddha. The retribution body of the Buddha, which is translated as *jingman* 淨滿 (*Vairocana*), meaning the one who has eliminated mental afflictions and attained the perfection of bliss and wisdom. This is the teaching of the Dharma-gate of self-realisation conducted by a *bodhisattva* of great capacity, residing in the ‘Flower store world’ (*Huacang shijie* 華藏世界). However, unfortunately, a group of less intelligent members of the Lesser Vehicle were unable to understand the *sūtra*. They were as if blind or deaf, unable to see or hear. This was referred to as having ears that have not heard the perfect and sudden teaching, and having eyes but not seeing the body of insight (*vipaśyanā*) carrying a piece of the Tathāgata’s caring mind. In a word, it is the period of direct discussion of the Mahāyāna perfect gate of sudden enlightenment, which causes one to experience sudden transcendence and enter straight through the gate of enlightenment, intended especially for those who had the natural intelligence fit for *bodhisattvas*. This is the *Avataṃsaka* period.

- (2) The *Āgama* (*Ahan* 阿含) period: the period of the *Āgama-sūtras* (*āgama* translates as the incomparable Dharma). It is also known as the Deer Park (*Luyuan* 鹿苑, *Mṛgadāva*) period. It was thus named the *Āgama* period after the *sūtra*, which was expounded by the Buddha at the time, while the name Deer park Period was given to it after the place where it was taught, for the *sūtra* had been originally taught in the so-called Deer Park. In the 12 years following his exposition of the *Avataṃsaka*, the Buddha took under his instruction a group of followers receptive only to the Lesser Teachings (*xiaoji* 小機), which is why at the time he taught the four *Āgama-sūtras*:
- (i) the *Ekottarāgama* in 51 chapters, explaining the causes and conditions of humans and *devas*;

- (ii) the *Dīrghāgama* in 22 chapters, which disposes of non-Buddhist teachings;
- (iii) the *Madhyamāgama* in 60 chapters, which explains the profound meaning of true tranquillity;
- (iv) the *Samyuktāgama* in 50 chapters, which explains all meditative concentrations.

These focus on discussing the gate of enlightenment of the Lesser Vehicle and are intended in particular for sentient beings of lesser intellectual abilities. Because at the *Avataṃsaka* assemblies the lesser minds had not managed to adopt the great teaching of the Buddhadharmā, the Tathāgata set out to conceal the greater and [instead] revealed the lesser aspects of his teaching, thus implementing their expedient side. Hence, he first taught the four noble principles and the 12 *nidāna* to a group of five monks (Kaundinya, Aśvajit, Bhadrīka, Daśabala-Kāśyapa, and Mahānāman) and others. Afterwards, he travelled the 16 great kingdoms, where he expounded on all the Dharma-gates of the Lesser Vehicle — that is, the four *Āgama-sūtras* as well as the *Navāṅgaśāsana-sūtras* (*Jiubu xiuduoluo* 九部修多羅).

- If from the 12 volumes of the early *sūtras* we remove the [following] three parts: the *Vaipulya* (*Fangguang* 放廣, ‘profound teachings’), the *Vyākaraṇa* (*Shouji* 授記, ‘prophesies’), and *Udāna* (*Wuwen zishuo* 無問自說, ‘unprompted teachings’), we get the nine parts of the Hīnayāna.
- If from the 12 parts we remove the three parts of *Nidāna* (*Yinyuan* 因緣, ‘expositions of causes’), *Apadāna* (*Piyu* 譬喻, ‘parables’), and *Upadeśa* (*Lunyi* 論議) we are left with are the nine parts of the Mahāyāna. The nine parts, however, often refer to the Hīnayāna. For a detailed explanation refer to the third part of the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*.

In brief, in this period, the Buddha exclusively taught the doctrine of the Lesser Vehicle, which was intended solely for a group of less intelligent sentient beings, so that they might turn from the Lesser toward the Greater (Vehicle), transcend the ordinary to become *arhats*. This is called the *Āgama* period.

(3) The *Vaipulya* (*Fangdeng* 方等) period: that is to say the period of the *Vaipulya sūtras*. The term *fangdeng* (*vaipulya*) is a generic term used for describing all Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Here, *fang* 方 is vast (*fangguang* 方廣) and *deng* 等 is impartial (*jundeng* 均等). Moreover, *guang* 廣 speaks of the extensiveness pertaining to the teachings of the Larger and the Lesser Vehicle, which makes it benefit from *jun* 均 or impartiality. *Deng* 等 further describes equality — in this role, it advocates the Mahāyāna principle of the equality of absolute and conventional truth. In the eight years following his teaching of the *Āgama*, the Buddha taught *sūtras* like the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra*, the *Brahmaviśeṣacintīparipṛcchā-sūtra*, the *Sandhinirmocana-sūtra* (*Wisdom of the Buddha-sūtra*), the *Suvarṇaprabhāṣottamarāja-sūtra* (*Golden light-sūtra*), the *Mahāsaṅghāta-sūtra* (*Great collection-sūtra*) and so on, which were all adapted to suit popular crowds. In these *sūtra* he praised the Mahāyāna and critiqued the Hīnayāna. Although the word was about impartial harmonious discussion of the four teachings, in truth, the intention is to advocate the Dharma-gate of the Major Vehicle (Mahāyāna) and to encourage lesser intellects to advance. Because the followers of the Lesser Vehicle deem its lesser attainment sufficient, they are not willing to further seek any Higher Vehicles. Therefore, at the *Vaipulya* assembly the Buddha made use of verses to reply to Vimalakīrti and other great scholars, making supreme efforts to criticise partiality and reprove the lesser, praising the Greater [Vehicle] and commending the all-encompassing, endeavouring to make them regret the Lesser and admire the Greater [Vehicle], and advance to the Higher Vehicle. In brief, the partial and complete are displayed at the same time, and the expedient and ultimately true are concurrently applied with the objective to lead the lesser and make them enter the greater. This represents the *Vaipulya* period.

(4) The *Prajñā* period: that is the time of the Buddha's teaching of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*. In the 22 years following his exposition of

the *Vaipulya*, the Buddha set out to dissolve emptiness and destroy attachments, which is why in four places and at the 16 assemblies:

- (i) seven assemblies held in the city of *Rājagṛha* and the *Gr̥dhrakūṭaparvata* (Vulture Peak Mountain);
- (ii) the seven assemblies of the city of *Śrāvastī* and with *Anāthapiṇḍada*;
- (iii) one assembly held in the *Maṇi (Pearl)-sūtra* Repository Hall of the king of the *Paranirmitavaśavartin* heaven;
- (iv) one assembly held on the side of the White Egret pond in the Bamboo Forest park in *Rājagṛha*).

He narrated all *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras* (we can distinguish between ten kinds and eight of these *sūtras*, while the *Great sūtra of perfection of wisdom* encompasses altogether 600 chapters), in which he instructed his followers on the genuine emptiness of the true nature of things, and the principle of complete harmony between absolute and conventional truth. Consequently, because of having undergone several kinds of criticism at the *Vaipulya* assemblies, the followers of the Lesser Vehicle, although in their minds they thus came to admire the Major Vehicle they still had their emotional attachments. As a result of that, their opinions were not changed and they were not prepared to follow the Buddha's instructions straightaway, having had no mind of fondness and happiness in relation to the pure land of the *buddha-field* (*buddhakṣetra*).²⁶⁵ Thus, the Tathāgata set out to make them clean by making special use of *prajñā*. To put it briefly, destroying illusions and revealing the truth is approaching materiality to understand emptiness. Such an approach allows one to sweep away any remaining attachments, transmitting and circulating the teaching, facilitating advancement

²⁶⁵ The term *buddha-field*, Sanskrit *buddha-kṣetra*, denotes the realm that constitutes the domain of a specific *buddha* (Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 153):

A *buddhakṣetra* is said to have two aspects, which parallel the division of a world system into the 'world of inanimate objects' (container world) and 'world of sentient beings'. As a result of his accumulation of merit, his collection of knowledge, and his specific vow, when a *buddha* achieves enlightenment, a 'container' or 'inanimate' world is produced in the form of a field where the *buddha* leads beings to enlightenment. The inhabitant of that world is the *buddha* endowed with all the *buddha-dharmas*.

towards the gate of the middle path of true nature, which was the root of the prediction that they would attain *buddha*-hood bestowed at the *Lotus-sūtra* assembly. This is the time of the *Prajñā* period.

- (5) The *Lotus* and *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* period: that is the period of the Buddha's teaching of the *Lotus-sūtra* (*Fahua jing* 法華經) and *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* (*Niepan jing* 涅槃經). After the Buddha taught the *prajñāpāramitā*, within seven years he recognized that sentient beings' foundations had matured, so he was now able to expel the expedient and reveal the real (extinguishing the attachments of the expedient path of the Lesser [Vehicle] and illustrating the principles of absolute truth). Thus, the Buddha explicated the seven chapters of the *Lotus-sūtra*, explaining genuinely the perfect gate of enlightenment and revealing the causes and effects of the One Vehicle. Three months after having expounded the *Lotus-sūtra*, on the day before he was to enter *nirvāṇa*, to take care of all kinds of sentient beings he narrated the two volumes of the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*, in which he reiterated the permanence of *buddha*-nature (*buddhadhātu*).

The *Lotus-sūtra* is thus the final teaching delivered by the Tathāgata in the period of 40 years. The time from the previous periods of criticism (the Vaipulya period), integration (the *Prajñā* period), down to the time, when disciples' skills were already proficient, resembled the process of an elder son inheriting the family property and a crown prince ascending to the throne. Thus at the assembly on the Vulture Peak (*Lingshan* 靈山), when the Tathāgata descended to instruct on the view of the Buddha, up until now, each of the Two Vehicles were blind to the prediction that they would attain *buddha*-hood. We certainly know that the *Lotus-sūtra* removes the expedient and reveals absolute truth, for by understanding the expedient one is able to return to the final teaching of One Vehicle of absolute truth. According to this, the preceding four periods were provisionally established, while the present, fifth period is that of the true meaning. Although the preceding fourth period also elucidates the perfect teaching, it concurrently explains the expedient principles of the

preceding three periods. This Dharma intended for treatment is thus not the teaching of pure and complete inherent nature of the *Lotus-sūtra* period. In brief, understanding the expediency of the Three Vehicles allows us to return to the absolute truth of the One Vehicle, which is also described as ‘to directly discard convenient means and speak only of the supreme path.’ This is the *Lotus-sūtra* period.

The *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* is the Tathāgata’s ultimately bestowed instruction. It contains a discussion of the four teachings as being of two different kinds:

(1) Retrospectively pursuing (*zhui* 追, [reflecting on]) the explication of the four teachings. Because the Tathāgata was concerned that at the *Lotus-sūtra* assembly there existed the danger of defilements and degeneration, for he had previously completed his mysterious aim, he strove to sort it out by expounding [on the issue] and cause his followers to return together to the truth of One Vehicle. But, aside from trying to settle the then still remaining detrimental impulses, this kind of explanation also served as an important convenient means for less intelligent and less capable sentient beings of the final age. This is why this is called ‘pursuing explication.’

(2) Retrospectively pursuing the obliteration of the four teachings. Obliteration means elimination. Although we pursue the doctrines taught in the previous four periods, these were still extinguished in accordance with the ongoing teaching (elimination of the expedient lesser [teachings]).

Therefore, the word is about pursuing obliteration.

In sum, ‘[retrospective] pursuing explication’ is using what is expedient, while ‘pursuing obliteration’ is revealing absolute truth. We can also say that pursuing explication is using the expedient for the sake of the true, while pursuing obliteration is discarding the expedient to establish the absolutely true. Even as the Buddha was about to enter *nirvāṇa*, suddenly he was faced with a number of challenges, including when Subhadra (an old brahmin 120 years of age) asked the Buddha to ordain him, and the Buddha first taught

him the expedient teachings leading him towards *arhat*-ship. This was using the expedient — pursuing explication. Afterwards, he expounded on permanent *buddha*-nature, with the aim of concealing within that the three virtues. This constituted the revelation of the absolute truth — pursuing obliteration. The meaning of this is discarding the expedient to establish the absolutely real. In brief, once again using the teaching of Dharma to correct the remaining impulses — pursuing explication and pursuing obliteration, constitutes the period of the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*. Because both the *Nirvāṇa* and *Lotus* explain the Mahāyāna principles of ultimate attainment of *buddha*-hood they were both combined in one period. It was only in this moment of time that the Tathāgata's major enterprise can be counted as completed, so that he finally started thinking joyfully about leaving this world.

In this place, we need to make the following few remarks: although the *Vaipulya* and the *Nirvāṇa* period both contained discussions of four teachings, their contents still possessed two different aspects, which a scholar cannot but be familiar with.

(1) From the beginning onwards, the perfect teaching within the four teachings of the *Vaipulya* knows that the permanence of *buddha*-nature is the same as *nirvāṇa*. While it was not known at the beginning of specific (distinct) teachings, it became known afterwards. In the two teachings of the Tripiṭaka and the general (shared) teachings, it was not known in either the first or the last of them. As for the four teachings of the *Nirvāṇa*, from the first to the last all contain permanent *buddha*-nature. This is the first difference. (2) The *Vaipulya sūtras* [i.e., the Perfection of Wisdom texts] consist in applying the so-called 'shared,' 'distinct,' and 'perfect' teachings of the 'full letter' [i.e., Mahāyāna] to the 'half letter' teachings [i.e. Lesser Vehicle] of the Tripiṭaka.²⁶⁶ The *Vaipulya* expounds on the Dharma-gate of full letters on 'shared, distinct, and perfect' (*tong, bie, yuan* 通別圓), which is set against the half letter Dharma-gate

²⁶⁶ ['Half letter' and 'full letter' is a Chinese commentarial mode of referring to the Lesser Vehicle and Supreme Vehicle respectively. Editor.]

of the Tripiṭaka (*zang* 藏). The *Nirvāṇa* thus uses the three expedient *dharma*s of the Tripiṭaka, shared, and distinct as assisting means for revealing the principle of the one truth. This is the second difference.

The above were the distinct five periods — the so-called: 12 *Āgama* and eight *Vaipulya* (that is to say, 12 years of teaching on the *Āgama* and eight years on *Vaipulya*), 22 years of talking on the *Prajñā*, seven years altogether on the *Lotus* and *Nirvāṇa*, and the first 37 days of *Avataṃsaka*.

The aforementioned five distinct periods highlight the sequence of the Tathāgata's uses of different teachings. Since this is simply speaking, we cannot be absolutely certain about it. The reason is that they were [arranged in accordance with the] explanations given later. Because I am afraid that a learned person might be prejudiced towards mistaken views, I shall subsequently also provide an explanation of the common (*tong*) five periods of the Buddha's teaching.

Here are the common five periods of the Buddha's teaching. The distinction between them shows how his teachings were completely interlinked and continuous, and thus not easily partitioned into certain periods of time in which certain *sūtras* were taught. It is however also possible that the Tathāgata's teaching of the Dharma originally had no fixed period of time nor was there a fixed Dharma. But this eventually changed because sentient beings, having been so diverse in character and intellectual capacities, required different approaches. In the endeavour to transform all things with compassion, the Tathāgata adapted his teaching to fit the respective abilities of individual beings. It thus needs to be recognized that the Dharma taught within the context of a particular setting was adapted to the listeners, containing the differences in: intellectual capacities, sudden versus gradual attainment, and partial versus complete. But how can an entire generation of subsequent verbal instructions be constrained to their particular time of instruction, without blending together with those before or after? If we assume that the period of the sudden-enlightenment-teaching of the *Avataṃsaka* was witnessed by a group of participants of lesser capacity, who adhered to the gradual teaching, then the Buddha also must have instructed the teaching using the means convenient for this group of participants. How

could there have been any reason for him to discard and not try to save them? Or if we say that in the *Āgama* period of the lesser teaching there happened also to be present the *bodhisattvas* of greater capacity, then would they have to wait until the *Nirvāṇa* and *Lotus* assemblies to absorb some teaching? Otherwise, at these assemblies some unsuitable discussions would occur. It needs to be recognised that the five different periods of teaching were established in accordance with the periods when the *sūtras* and the baskets were created. The intention behind the division was to make it more convenient for succeeding generations of students to study the scriptures. In the meantime, those scriptures which were identical in purport and tenets were sorted into five distinct periods according to their type. Therefore, if one only understands the five distinct periods, then one regards the complete teaching of the Buddha's entire lifetime as inconsistent if collected into a single whole — that is, as not completely reliable. This is why we must reinterpret them both as in harmony with each other as well as pertaining to the five common periods. These is the meaning of the five common periods.

In summary, the classification of five distinct periods is intended to serve as an illustration of how the periods of the Buddha's teaching of Dharma followed one after another, from the first down to the fifth period, as a sequence of teaching adapted to the various needs of his disciples. In this way, the doctrine taught in each respective period makes a clear distinction between the sudden and the gradual ways of attainment, and between expedient teaching and the teaching on absolute truth. In other words, it was adapted to fit the personal characteristics of sentient beings, whom the Tathāgata intended to lead through a sequence of successive stages to maturation. This is what is meant by: it started with 'comparing the guidelines' (*niyi* 擬宜) in the *Avatamsaka* period; it proceeded with 'seduction' (*yinyou* 引誘) in the *Āgama*; then 'exhortations' (*cejin* 策進, [lit. 'spur by whipping'], also referred to as *tanhe* 彈訶,²⁶⁷ in the *Vaipulya*; then 'cleansing' them with *Prajñā*; so as to complete the process by finally 'opening up and revealing' (*kaixian* 開顯)²⁶⁸ with the teaching of the *Lotus*.

²⁶⁷ This is probably a typo, and should be written as *tanhe* 彈劾, 'scold, impeach.'

²⁶⁸ Also referred to as *fuzhu* 咐囑, a synonym for 囑咐, 'exhort, instruct.'

On the other hand, the common five periods illustrate how the Tathāgata's manner of teaching changed with time according to the situation and capacity of the sentient beings he wanted to enlighten. In this way, the changes in particular periods reveal that the manner of instruction was not limited to a certain year or month, and did not depend on a specific procedure. This means that the complete and sudden principle of Mahāyāna might have been generally and directly discussed already in the *Avatamsaka* period, or the Dharma-gate of the gradual teaching of the Hīnayāna might have also been specifically discussed during the *Āgama* period. If one is aware of this principle of the concurrent commonality and distinctness of the five periods, then one will clearly distinguish and understand the period of two kinds of four teachings, without committing any mistake. In this way, one will not be blindly stuck with the explanation of '12 years of *Āgama*, eight years of *Vaipulya*... and a total of seven years of the *Lotus* and *Nirvāṇa*,' and thus avoid misunderstanding the original aim of the Tathāgata's teaching of Dharma.

Moreover, the sacred practice chapter of the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* contains a simile, which compares the five periods to the sequence of five stages (*wuwei* 五味, 'five flavours') of making *ghee* from milk to maturation (Endnote no. 5). The process of making *ghee* is described as follows: first, we obtain milk from a cow, then we extract cream, then we obtain fresh butter, then we make ripe butter, and in the end, we transform heated butter into refined *ghee*. This five-stage sequence of maturation is precisely like the Buddha's five periods of bringing sentient beings' innate characteristics to maturity. The first period of the *Avatamsaka* was the time when the Buddha first attained enlightenment and was thus directly explaining the perfect and sudden Dharma-gate of the Major Vehicle to a group of followers of great intellectual capacities. Because this stage can be compared to milking a cow, we therefore treat the *Avatamsaka* period as the taste of milk (*ruwei* 乳味). During the *Āgama* period, the Buddha concealed the Greater Vehicle and presented the Lesser, which is why, after having narrated the teaching of the *Avatamsaka*, he set out to instruct his disciplines about the *Āgama-sūtra*. Because this stage was similar to obtaining cream from milk, the *Āgama* period is referred to as the taste of cream (*laowei* 酪味). In the time of the

Vaipulya period, to lead the lesser disciples to the Greater Vehicle, following the *Āgama*, the Buddha then taught the series of Mahāyāna *Vaipulya-sūtras*. Because this was like obtaining butter from cream, the *Vaipulya* period is referred to as the taste of fresh butter (*shengsuwei* 生酥味). In the time of the fourth, the *Prajñā* period, to eliminate disciples' attachments and make them abandon sentiments, the Buddha subsequently expounded on the wisdom of *prajñā*. Because this stage was similar to obtaining ripe butter from fresh butter, we say that the *Prajñā* period is the taste of ripe butter (*shusuwei* 熟酥味). In the fifth period of the *Lotus*, to expel the expedient and reveal the absolute truth, following his teaching of *prajñā*, the Buddha subsequently expounded the teaching of the *Lotus*. Because this stage was similar to obtaining refined *ghee* from ripe butter, we say that the *Lotus* period is the taste of refined *ghee*. Above we have summarised the content of the five periods as five flavours in the process of producing *ghee*.

Here ends the explanation of the common and distinct five periods of the Buddha's teaching.

Next, we shall explain the eight teachings. Over the entire period in which the Tathāgata enlightened sentient beings according of their abilities, he was in fact explaining the immeasurable and unlimited Dharma-gate of enlightenment, the content of which can be summarised in the form of the classification of eight categories. These eight categories can further be divided into two kinds of four teachings: four teachings on the method of conversion (*huayi sijiao* 化儀四教)²⁶⁹ and four teachings on adaptive Dharma (*huafa sijiao* 化法四教).²⁷⁰ Hereby, there are altogether eight teachings.

²⁶⁹ This is the Tiantai notion, which describes the rules and methods used by the Buddha in instructing his disciples. *Huayi* 化儀 means 'transforming method.' The *huayi sijiao* 化儀四教 are also referred to as the 'four modes of conversion.' This latter translation will be used in the translation of Binzong's analytic explanation of the meaning of the term. The four methods are: sudden, gradual, esoteric, and indeterminate or variable.

²⁷⁰ Forming an opposition to the practical *huayi* 化儀, the term *huafa* 化法 denotes the four methods of teaching. The elementary meaning of the phrase *huafa sijiao* 化法四教 is 'four types of content for teaching the Dharma,' while we could also translate it as the 'four

First, we shall explain the four modes of exposition.

These include sudden teachings, gradual teachings, secret teachings, and indefinite teachings. They represent ‘methods’ (*yi* 儀) used by the Buddha in ‘converting’ (*hua* 化) sentient beings, which is why they are called *huayi* 化儀 or ‘methods of conversion’ (like medicine for the world (*shi yaofang* 世藥方)).

- (1) Sudden teachings (*dunjiao* 頓教): *dun* 頓 means to directly enter enlightenment by sudden transcendence. It means not having to undergo a sequence of stages, referred to as ‘at once transcending [the this worldly existence] and entering directly the state of a Tathāgata (*yichao zhiru Rulaidi* 一超直入如來地). It is, therefore, called the sudden teaching. This kind of teaching is intended for individuals of natural genius, who are capable of directly receiving the great Dharma. Hence, it does not apply any convenient means for seducing practitioners, but instead directly provides the Dharma of sudden transcendence of the Major Vehicle. Such is, for example, the *Huayan-sūtra* (*Avatamsaka-sūtra*).
- (2) Gradual teachings (*jianjiao* 漸教): *jian* 漸 is ‘advancing gradually,’ it means attaining the great by setting out from the lesser. It is what is described as taking time for cultivation and realising the rewards of different stages of attainment by eliminating confusions one after another. This is why these kinds of teachings are called gradual teachings. They are intended for people of limited capacities, who are unable to receive the great Dharma and who must be gradually seduced and introduced into it. For this reason, they must first be taught the Lesser Vehicle (Hīnayāna), so that they can proceed from

teachings on the transformative Dharma.’ These are: the Hīnayāna teachings; shared teachings, comprising Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna teachings used by all Three Vehicles; distinct teachings intended for the *bodhisattvas* and pertaining to the ‘distinct’ insight of the Mahāyāna; and the perfect teachings. Since the *hua* 化 is said to be based on the Buddha’s method of adapting the teaching to the skills of his disciples, the term is also translated as ‘adaptive Dharma.’

shallow to deeper teaching and gradually enter the Major Vehicle (Mahāyāna). Such are the teachings of the *Āgama-sūtras*.

- (3) Esoteric teachings (*mimijiao* 秘密教): *mimi* 秘密 means what is not revealed. It describes sentient beings of different natural dispositions and capacities, who were all gathered at the same assembly to receive the Buddha's instructions. Using the unimaginable divinity-like power of the three Dharma-wheels (*sanlun* 三輪), of perfect voice and fluent speech, the Buddha caused all sentient beings present to derive benefits according to the types of their predispositions. Because the disciples gathered around the Buddha were of different capacities, the depth of their gains differed from one another. Although they attended the same assembly and received the same instructions on the same Dharma, their auditory realisation was either gradual or sudden, to the extent that this and that person did not mutually know each other's understanding of the teaching. This is why we speak about 'secret' teachings. Not mutually knowing each other's minds means that the people who attend the same assembly and listened to the teaching were unaware of their different benefits. Consequently, for example, those who are awakened about the greater Dharma maintain that the Tathāgata himself spoke exclusively about the great teaching (Mahāyāna), while those who are awakened about the lesser Dharma maintain that the Buddha taught exclusively about the lesser teaching (Hīnayāna). It is furthermore like those awakened about the Greater Dharma maintain that the Tathāgata spoke about the Greater Dharma in the same manner, or when those enlightened into the Lesser Dharma maintain that the Tathāgata spoke about the Lesser Dharma in the same manner. The *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* says:

When the great sage Śākyamuni was revered by the masses, none of those who were pure-minded was not happy when observing the Buddha, although each of them saw the World Honoured One in front of them, this was then due to the distinctive characteristics of their spiritual powers.

This is a convincing testimony of how those disciples who attended the same assembly and listened to the same Dharma, were not aware of each other. The *sūtra* further says:

Although the Buddha used one voice to teach the Dharma, each sentient being derived their own understanding in accordance with their character, while all of them claimed that their understanding was consistent with the words of the World Honoured One. This was then due to the distinctive characteristics of their spiritual powers.

This can be regarded as proof of how the Tathāgata expounded one Dharma in the same way. In short, because people were mutually unaware about what kind of Dharma they received and understood, such teaching is called a secret teaching. There also exists another interpretation: when the Tathāgata practised the four kinds of comportment of walking, standing, sitting and lying down, this often tacitly implied knowledge recognised by all *buddhas*. This is, when he bowed his head and put up his hand as a sign, when he blinked and raised his eyebrows, all such gestures without exception were secretly revolving the great, eternal wheel of Dharma. In relation to this very fact, sentient beings' grasping of their own respective aspects and gaining benefits is also the reason why the Buddha's teaching can be called the secret teaching.

- (4) Variable teaching (*budingjiao* 不定教): akin to the esoteric teaching, this kind of teaching also represents a case of listening to the same yet hearing differently. Although, for example, the Tathāgata expounded on the Dharma in one specific way, sentient beings all understood it differently. Because their understanding, based on their own capacities, differed so greatly from each another, such teaching is called 'indeterminate teaching.' In brief, in cases of listening to the same words yet hearing different things, given that they do not know each other's mind, this is called 'secret teaching,' then if they come to know each other's understanding, this would render such teaching indeterminate. Basically, however, these two kinds of teachings are one in their substance (content). If mutually knowing each other's different understandings revealed this teaching as indeterminate, then not knowing this fact constitutes an esoteric indeterminate teaching. Another interpretation is that at one assembly, because listeners attending were of unequal mental capacities and spiritual constitutions and in order to make them all

profit, the Tathāgata adapted his teaching to their abilities. It is therefore possible to assume that he used a combination of both sudden and gradual teachings; and that he described both the partial and the perfect teachings at the same time. Hence, those capable of hearing about the sudden path, heard the sudden teaching, while those for whom it was appropriate to hear about the gradual path, heard only the teaching about the gradual path. Or it was maybe that to this group of people he explained sudden attainment, while to that group of listeners he explained the gradual path, so that both were able to gain understanding in accordance with their abilities, while the benefits gained from such instruction varied. Those who heard the sudden teaching, obtained sudden benefits, while those who listened to the gradual, obtained gradual benefits. ‘The Buddha’ refers to him who, during a single session, would teach different teachings (sudden teachings to some, gradual teachings to others); ‘capacities’ refers to the fact that [the audience] would listen to one thing, but hear different messages. Because the Buddha’s teaching was heard in a variable way, it would not be correct to classify a teaching expounded at one sitting (assembly) only into any specific category of teachings, that is, for example, as either sudden or gradual. For this reason, the term ‘variable teaching’ was adopted to include both. Furthermore, it might also be that within gradual teaching one found enlightenment about the principles of the sudden teaching, and within sudden teaching the principles of the gradual. This is what is meant by hearing the Great teaching and becoming aware of Lesser principles and hearing the Lesser teaching and becoming aware of Greater principles. Because nothing is thus determinate such teachings are called indeterminate.

The *Treatise of wisdom* says that when the Buddha was in the Deer Park turning the Dharma wheel of the four noble truths for the first time, *Kaundinya* and the other five disciples obtained the fruit of stream entry, 80,000 divinities (*devas*) obtained the purity of the Dharma-eye, while at the same time a measureless numbers of *bodhisattvas* heard the teaching of the

Mahāyāna and obtained the patience of nonarising,²⁷¹ this event represented a clear demonstration of listening to the same yet hearing differently. This was precisely as when the Buddha expounded the four noble truths,

- the followers of the Tripiṭaka teachings heard the principle of realisation of the causes and conditions of birth and death;
- the adherents of the common teaching heard the principle of realisation that the *nidāna* were empty;
- the adherents of the distinct teaching heard the principle of realisation that the *nidāna* were emptiness and emptiness was provisional, and
- the adherents of the perfect teaching heard was the principle of realisation that the *nidāna* were the true nature of the middle path.

These were all the same in meaning. To put it briefly, when the Buddha taught the Dharma using a single voice, sentient beings understood it in accordance with their respective capacities, while not knowing each other's understanding rendered it a secret teaching. Because at one sitting the Buddha taught in accordance with capacities, sentient beings also understood in accordance with those. But when they came to know each other's understanding, this made it an indeterminate (variable) teaching. Secret and indeterminate teachings can command the two teachings of sudden and gradual enlightenment, and when discussed together with the five periods, then the sudden teaching directly illuminates the Greater Dharma, while the gradual teaching specifically treats of the Lesser Vehicle. The indeterminate teaching is, furthermore, a 'different speech within the same sitting,' when what was understood was different. The secret teaching is the Buddha's teaching of Dharma using one single sound, while sentient beings understood the Buddha's words in accordance with their capacities.

Furthermore, if we want to study the four modes of teaching more closely, it is necessary to interpret these by means of three categories of: teaching (*jiao* 教), practice (*xing* 行), and categories (*bu* 部).

²⁷¹ The term *wusheng ren* 無生忍 can appear in the forms *wusheng ren* 無生忍 and *buqifa ren* 不起法忍. It represents one of the three kinds of 'patience' or 'tolerance' (*sanren* 三忍), describing a *bodhisattva*'s patient acceptance or tolerance of all phenomena based on the awareness of their nonarising (*wusheng* 無生).

The three meanings of sudden teachings:

- (1) Teaching — here this refers to how [the Buddha] did not modify his approach in different time periods, and simply directly proclaimed the perfect and sudden great teaching; as a distinct term it only refers to what was taught during the *Avatamsaka* period; in terms of common periods, it was contained in all five periods.
- (2) Practice — describes not undergoing a sequence, the sudden transcendence of entering *nirvāṇa*; what is called attaining complete *bodhi* at the time of initial determination; in terms of distinct periods, it refers exclusively to the practice of the *Avatamsaka*; in regard to the common periods, it is present within the three periods of *Vaipulya*, *Prajñā*, and *Lotus*.
- (3) Categories — *bu* 部 means category; it refers to the 12 categories (parts) of the Tripiṭaka. It refers specifically to the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*. Commonly, it is the direct exposition of the Dharma-gate of sudden enlightenment within the entire period of the Buddha's teachings. Such are, for example, the *Sūtra of perfect enlightenment*, and similar *sūtras* which are all included in this category.

The three meanings of gradual teachings:

- (1) Teaching — this refers to how [the Buddha] led people of dull aptitude by means of an indirect way, and modified his approach in three periods. First, they were taught the Lesser and later the Greater [path]. Distinctly, it refers specifically to the teachings of the *Āgama*, *Vaipulya*, and *Prajñā* periods, while, commonly, it also includes the two periods before and after these three.
- (2) Practice — describes step-by-step cultivation, the realisation which follows a specific sequence (a process of devotional practice which lasts for *kalpas*, following a sequence of stages of eliminating confusions and realising the truth).
- (3) Categories — specifically, gradual enlightenment is limited to referring only to the *Āgama-sūtra*, while, commonly, it refers to the entire lifetime of all the teachings, where the Lesser Vehicle was expounded to seduce people to enter the Dharma-gate, which can thus all be included into the category of *Āgama*. On the other hand,

all teachings that criticise the partial and scold the Lesser, all teachings that exhort followers to enter the Dharma-gate, should be included into the category of *Vaipulya*. On the other hand, all teachings that destroy clinging by means of complete emptiness, and which [the Buddha] instructed [his disciples starting from Subhūti] to transmit [from generation to generation], should be included in the *Prajñā* category.

The three meanings of the esoteric teachings:

- (1) Teaching — using the unfathomable force of the three wheels (the wheel of the body commonly revealed, the wheel of the mouth expounding on Dharma, the wheel of consciousness which mirrored sentient beings' capacities), in the four periods of teaching, the Buddha taught the Dharma using one voice, which was understood by sentient beings in accordance with their capacities. There is no distinct period of teaching which can be pointed at, whereas the common periods include the first four periods (before the *Lotus*). Of these, only the *Lotus* represented a revealed teaching. It includes only secret mantras and not the secret teachings.
- (2) Practice — describes either cultivation of Lesser practices to esoterically (secretly) realise the great fruits or cultivating the Great practice to esoterically (secretly) realise the Lesser fruits. It is also like accepting and maintaining the Dharma-gate of *dhāraṇī*, which is also one kind of secret practice.
- (3) Categories — distinctly, it refers specifically to all *dhāraṇī-sūtras*, while, commonly, it is contained in all *sūtras* (like the *Pure land-dhāraṇī* in the *Amitābha-sūtra* or the *Śūraṅgama dhāraṇī* of the *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* etc.).

The three meanings of the indeterminate teachings: teaching and practice are both identical to the secret teaching. (3) Categories — there is no distinct category to refer to, while the common is possessed within the first four periods of teaching.

The above are the four modes of exposition. Sudden and gradual teachings are vertical modes of conversion (*huayī*), while the secret and indeterminate

are the horizontal modes of conversion. In summary, the ‘sudden teachings’ are intended for the adherents of highest capacities, they are the perfect teachings of the sudden period, such as the doctrine expounded on in the *Avatamsaka* period of the Buddha’s teaching. The ‘gradual teachings,’ on the other hand, are intended as instruments of gradual immersion into the true Dharma, such as the doctrine taught in the *Āgama* period. The ‘secret teachings’ were intended as a special kind of expedient instrument of instruction, spoken with a perfect voice, which made the disciples present at the assembly understand in accordance with their capacities, attaining secret understanding unknown to others. The ‘variable teachings’ were expositions of Dharma taught in accordance with listener’s individual capacities within a single assembly; both the teachings for the Lesser as well as Greater capacities were used, both partial and complete teachings were narrated, so that the benefits of those who listened to the teachings were variable with regard to respective capacities. The four modes of exposition have thus been explained. Now, I shall further try to explain the four types of transformative teachings:

These are the Tripiṭaka teachings, common teachings, distinct teachings, and perfect teachings. They represent the Dharma (*fā* 法) used by the historical Buddha to ‘transform’ (*hua* 化, [enlighten as *jiaohua* 教化]) sentient beings, which is why they were called ‘Dharma of transformation’ (*huafa* 化法; like prescribing different kinds of medicine to the world).

- (1) The Tripiṭaka teachings (the teachings of the Lesser Vehicle): overall, we ought to call these teachings the Tripiṭaka of the Lesser Vehicle (Hīnayāna). Because the Tripiṭaka which served as the origin of the Lesser Vehicle (Hīnayāna) — Sūtra, Vinaya, and Abhidharma, if compared with the Tripiṭaka of the Major Vehicle (Mahāyāna) is relatively more systematic, therefore we call the Lesser Vehicle the Tripiṭaka teaching. It is composed of the *Āgama-sūtras* as its Sūtrapiṭaka (*Jingzang* 經藏, *Collection of discourses*) part, the *Vinaya* as its Vinayapiṭaka (*Lüzang* 律藏, *Collection of monastic rules*; the Sanskrit *Vinaya*, which is also called *pi’naiye* 毗奈耶; this translates as ‘rules’ or ‘to tame, subdue’), the Abhidharma

as its Abhidharmapitaka (*Lunzang* 論藏, *Collection of treatises*; the complete name is Apidamo 阿毗達磨, which is translated as an ‘incomparable Dharma’). This teaching focuses on transforming those followers of the Two Vehicles who are possessed the capacities of *śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha*, thus being purely a teaching of the Lesser Vehicle. It aims at instructing those sentient beings of dull sense who reside within this realm, explaining to them the four noble truths of birth and cessation, the 12 causes and conditions, and encourages them to engage in the six perfections (*pāramitā*), to engage in the meditative practice of analysing the emptiness of things, destroy the illusions of seeing and thinking, attain all-knowledge (*yiqiezhī* 一切智, *sarvajñātā*), observing only the principle of emptiness, exit delimited *samsāra* and realise the unbalanced truth of *nirvāṇa*. This is the meaning of the Tripiṭaka teachings.

- (2) Common teachings (*tongjiao* 通教): *tong* 通 means the same (*tong* 同). It is the teaching which is the same for all the Three Vehicles. Its doctrinal tenets conjoin the Three Vehicles of the *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and *bodhisattva*. What is thus called common (*tong*) permeates the previous Tripiṭaka teachings as well as the latter distinct and perfect teachings. This is the reason they are called common teachings (those of limited capacities connect (*tong*) with the former Tripiṭaka teachings, while those with natural powers of intelligence connect (*tong*) with the latter two, the distinct and perfect teachings). This represents an endeavour at enlightening and saving the more capable sentient beings within the realms [of existence], providing correct guidance to the *bodhisattvas* and in parallel also transforming the Two Vehicles, understanding that the four noble truths of no-birth, the twelve *nidāna* of not being born and not ceasing, the six *pāramitās* of reason (*lǐ* 理), cultivating the observation of emptiness of substance, and completely eliminating the illusions of seeing and thinking of the three realms. Furthermore, it approaches latent tendencies, obtains all-knowledge, attains insight into the principle of actual truth, breaks out of delimited

saṃsāra, and realises the ultimate truth of *nirvāṇa*. This all is called the common teaching.

- (3) Distinct teaching (*biejiao* 別教): *bie* 別 means distinct and different. Its teaching is intended exclusively for the *bodhisattvas* and is not in common (*tong*) with the *śrāvaka* and the *pratyekabuddhas*. What is called distinct in regard to the former two teachings of the Tripiṭaka and the common teachings, reveals the non-Hīnayāna (non-Lesser Vehicle), and what is distinct in regard to the perfect teaching is revealing the non-Buddha Vehicle (*buddhayāna*). Because the Tripiṭaka correctly guides the Two Vehicles, it belongs to the teaching of the Hīnayāna. Although the common teaching is intended to guide the Mahāyāna, it still involves the doctrinal tenets of the Two Vehicles. Because the presently discussed distinct teaching does not concurrently also involve the doctrine of the two teachings, we therefore name it distinct from the preceding two teachings of the Tripiṭaka and the common teaching. Also, because it specifically explains the Dharma of the *bodhisattva*, and not the perfect Buddhadharma, we call it distinct from the latter perfect teaching. Since it is neither the Two Vehicles (distinct from the former Tripiṭaka teaching) nor the Buddha Vehicle (distinct from the latter perfect teaching), therefore we call it a distinct teaching. On a more specific note: its teaching (*jiao*), principles (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), cutting off (*duan*), practice (*xing*), stages (*wei*), causes (*yin*) and results (*guo*) are different from the former two teachings of the Tripiṭaka and the common teaching and has characteristics distinct from the perfect teaching. While the ‘teaching’ covers only the *bodhisattvas*, the ‘principles’ distinguish three approaches to reality, ‘wisdom’ contains the sequence of the three types of wisdom, the ‘cutting off’ the three delusions in their entirety, ‘practice’ the differences between the five practices, ‘stages’ what is not mutually received at one stage or another, ‘causes’ as what issues forth from one single cause not yielding the two extremes, and ‘results’ the same effect does not subsume the differences of all stages. This teaching is intended to instruct *bodhisattvas* outside the realms and beyond beings of dull capacities. It elucidates the measureless four noble truths, the incomprehensible 12 causes and effects, the

incomprehensible six perfections (the sixth of the six perfections, the perfection of wisdom in turn opens up the four perfections of convenient means, vows, powers, and wisdoms; together with the first six, this amounts to ten perfections). This is all distinct teaching: practising the sequence of threefold contemplation, cutting off mistaken views and thoughts of the three realms, the two delusions, as well as the 12 kinds of ignorance, attainment of enlightenment and the wisdom of the seeds of all phenomena, possessing insight into the principles of conventional truth, achieving partial realisation of the principles of the middle truth, transcending the two kinds of delimited and miraculous birth and death, and realising the nonlocalized *nirvāṇa* of the middle path.

[(Note) the differences between the five kinds of practice: morality, meditation, and wisdom are called the ‘noble practices’ (*shengxing* 聖行) (the practice of entering emptiness [through] the ten abodes belong to the Tripiṭaka and common teachings); loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity are called ‘pure practices’ (*fanxing* 梵行, *brahmacārya*; the ten practices of the ten transfers of merit to realise the provisional practice); practices perfected on the basis of principles are called ‘heavenly practices’ (practices of the middle path above the first ground); the function of engaging in transforming others by setting out from heaven, revealing the identity of lesser with the virtuous is called ‘infant practices’ (that is the function of kindness), revealing the identity of mental defilements is called ‘practices of ailments’ (that is the function of compassion). Tripiṭaka practice and the common practice only contain ‘noble practices’ and only to a lesser degree the ‘pure practices.’ The accomplishment of the five practices is not the same as the preceding teachings of the Tripiṭaka and the common teaching. The perfect teaching, on the other hand, practises all teachings in one practice. If practices are cultivated in succession, then they are not the same as perfect teaching.]

- (4) Perfect teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教): *yuan* 圓 ‘not lacking anything,’ denotes a teaching of perfect, ultimate, and complete attainment of

buddha-hood. It is therefore called the perfect teaching (it harmoniously blends the three expedient teachings of the Tripiṭaka, common, and distinct teachings into one teaching of inherent true nature). Speaking in greater detail, it denotes the perfectly sublime (*yuanmiao* 圓妙, unfathomable perfect interpenetration of the three noble truths), the perfect fulfilled (*yuanman* 圓滿, when the three are one and cessation has no deficiencies), the perfectly sufficient (*yuanzu* 圓足, perfect insight into the principles of things, so that one thought already suffices), and the perfect and sudden (*yuandun* 圓頓, perfect transcendence of direct entrance into enlightenment, when the essence is not gradually achieved). As a result, this teaching is called the perfect teaching, it instructs the *bodhisattvas* with the highest capacities outside the realms, elucidating the four unconstructed noble truths, the unfathomable 12 *nidāna*, the six perfections of balanced inner nature, the ten perfections. It is a teaching which speaks about the middle way of the complete interpenetration of the true nature of things with the actual principles of reality. It is the teaching about the practice of threefold meditation in a single mind, of complete elimination of the three delusions and mental defilements, the attainment of all-embracing wisdom (*yiqie zhong zhi* 一切種智), the principle of three truths seen in one object, the perfect transcendence of the two kinds of birth and death, and the perfect realisation of the three virtues of *nirvāṇa*. All this constitutes the perfect teaching.

The above-described teachings of Tripiṭaka, common and distinct are the expedient instruments and convenient means used by the Tathāgata, while the latter perfect teaching represents the Tathāgata's discussion of the balanced nature of the ultimate truth.

In sum, the Tripiṭaka teaching is the cultivation of an analytic observation of the emptiness of all things — seeing emptiness outside existence (discarding materiality and grasping emptiness); the common teaching practices the observation of the emptiness of substance — as being both materiality and emptiness (the profound realisation that the substance of all phenomena is

emptiness); the distinct teaching practises the sequence of threefold contemplation — entering the provisional from emptiness, grasping the mean from the provisional, materiality differing not from emptiness, emptiness, differing not from materiality, existence of the middle path outside materiality and emptiness; the perfect teaching practices threefold contemplation in a single mind — all kinds of emptiness in one emptiness, there exists neither provisional nor mean that is not empty, the provisional nature of everything in one provisional thing, there is no emptiness nor middle that is not provisional, all means in one mean (*zhong* 中), nonprovisional, nonempty and not the mean, and emptiness and existence that are the middle path.

The abovementioned are the four types of transformative Dharma, which together with the four modes of exposition constitute the eight teachings. The modes of exposition are the practical teachings, while the transformative teachings are the teachings on the object of practice.

In turn, as we must know which of the five periods includes which teaching, we must also know how these included the transformative Dharma and the modes of its exposition.

- (1) The *Avatamsaka* period was the time when the Buddha first attained the path of enlightenment, after which he first offered a direct explanation of the perfect sudden Dharma-gate to his disciples of great capacity. For instance, during the sunrise the sun first illuminates the highest mountains, such was the sudden teaching in the four modes of exposition, and such was the principle of concurrently explaining the distinct teaching and the correct elucidation of the perfect teaching. It consists in taking one expedient means to explain one aspect of true nature (taking the explanation of the expedient principles of distinct teachings, to correctly elucidate the true meaning of perfect teaching), while its teaching can be classified as one coarse and the other subtle, so that its flavour is like obtaining milk from a cow. This is also why the *Avatamsaka* period is regarded as the taste of milk.

- (2) The *Āgama* period was the time when the Buddha used the expedient for the absolutely real, having put aside the sudden and expounded the gradual. This period of teaching was akin to the ascent of the solar disc into the sky, gradually casting light down into deep valleys. In the four modes of exposition this period constitutes a gradual teaching (the gradual teaching is divided into three periods — beginning, middle, and final grades, of which the *Āgama* represents the beginning grade). In the four types of transformative teachings, it only explains the principles of the *Tripitaka* Hīnayāna teachings. It is only expedient, without containing the absolutely real; regarding the classification of teachings, it is only coarse, without containing any subtle categories. Its taste is like extracting cream from milk. Therefore, we speak of the *Āgama* period as the taste of cream.
- (3) The *Vaipulya* period was the time when the Buddha's teaching was intended to lead the 'small towards the greater,' the time of equal universal transformation. It is akin to, for example, the sun illuminating flat lands, which can be divided into three times — early morning, mid-morning, and noon. This is the time of early morning (7:00 to 9:00 AM), when the modes of exposition are in the middle grade, while the four types of transformative teachings are all discussed at the same time — it expounds the Mahāyāna principles of common, distinct, and perfect contrasted against the Hīnayāna teachings of the *Tripitaka*. It further takes the three different kinds of expedient means to elucidate one innate truth — taking the expedient means of the *Tripitaka*, common, and distinct teachings to explicate the principles of one true nature of perfect teaching. When it comes to doctrinal classification, it is three parts coarse and one part subtle. Its flavour is like obtaining fresh butter from cream, which is why we call the *Vaipulya* period the taste of fresh butter.
- (4) The *Prajñā* period was the time devoted to rooting out all remaining attachments. It can be compared to mid-morning (9:00 -11:00 AM). The four modes of exposition are within the end grades, while in regard to the four transformative teachings, the two teachings of the common and distinct are adopted to correctly explain the principles of the perfect teaching. It takes two parts of expedient means to

explain one single innate truth of everything, while with regard to the classification of teachings it is two parts coarse and one part subtle. It is like obtaining mature butter from fresh butter. Therefore, the *Prajñā* period is called the taste of ripe butter.

- (5) The *Lotus* and *Nirvāṇa* periods are the time, when the *Lotus-sūtra* was used to dissolve the expedient and to reveal the absolute truth, and the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* was used to clear up the mess of the remaining instruments [of understanding]. It can be compared to the time in the day, when the solar disc shines all over the earth, namely noon, when the sunlight makes all shadows disappear. Regarding the four modes of exposition, the *Lotus* transcends all four teachings — it is not sudden, not gradual, not esoteric, and not variable. Instead, the *Lotus* absorbs the Three Vehicles and returns a single Vehicle. Because it urges only engaging in provisional cultivation to attain perfection, it is nonsudden. Because it only speaks about the supreme path, which has no grades and stages, it is nongradual. Because it instructs that the Buddha lands of the ten directions know only One Vehicle, which speaks about the true nature of things, it is non-esoteric. Because the raising of one's hand and bowing one's head are both considered as paths towards attaining *buddha*-hood, and that all sentient beings can attain *buddha*-hood, it is nonvariable. Being nonsudden, nongradual, non-esoteric and nonvariable, this constitutes the profoundly abstruse aspect of the *Lotus*. Considering the four adaptive teachings, it only elucidates the perfect teaching, without in turn needing to make use of other teachings. It is only centred on absolute truth, without adopting the expedient, and it is categorised as a completely pure teaching without any coarse aspects. Hence, its taste resembles that of obtaining refined *ghee* from ripe butter. It ought to be noted that the perfect teaching as elucidated by the *Lotus*, is not the same as the perfect teaching in the preceding types of perfect teaching, for the latter's perfect teaching consists exclusively of the Tripiṭaka, common, and distinct teachings, while the former completely absorbs all these kinds of teachings returning to the perfected and final One Vehicle of *buddha*-hood; for this reason, the *Lotus* is referred to as the category of pure, perfect, and exclusively subtle teaching. The *Nirvāṇa*, on

the other hand, retrospectively pursues the explication of the four teachings and then also seeks to obliterate them. Because both period-wise and taste-wise it is equal to the *Lotus*, they are both likened to the supreme refined taste of *ghee*. In short, since the *Avatamsaka* belongs to the sudden teachings, it is included amongst the distinct teachings. Since the *Āgama* belongs to the early gradual teachings, it is included amongst the Tripitaka. Since the *Vaipulya* belongs to the middle gradual teachings, it is included amongst the common teachings. Since the *Prajñā* counts as the final gradual, it is included amongst the distinct teachings. Since the *Lotus* and the *Nirvāṇa* transcend the sudden-gradual distinction, it thus pertains solely to the perfect teachings. It must further be noted that the sudden teachings simultaneously use the distinct teachings, while it is only correct for them to make use of the perfect teaching. The gradual teachings, on the other hand, make a simultaneous use of the *Tripitaka*, common, and distinct teachings. Finally, the secret and variable teachings make common use of all four teachings.

In summary, we can say that the four periods differentiate between the main stages within the World Honoured One's entire lifetime of teaching the Dharma. The eight teachings, on the other hand, differentiate between different paradigms of the Tathāgata's adaptive teaching in accordance with individuals' capacities. The four modes of exposition are the different forms of methods of exposition of the teachings, which are determined in accordance with the differences in the nature and capacities of the subjects of enlightenment. The four kinds of transformative teachings discern between expedient and absolutely real elements of the instruction and the practice of Buddhist *sūtras*. In brief, because we distinguish between five categories of time, we therefore speak about the five periods. Because we distinguish between eight categories of teaching, we speak about eight teachings.

The abovementioned five periods and eight kinds of teaching, established by the sages and great Masters, constitute the Tiantai method of classification. Since as a method it is very regulated and follows rigorous standards, it can indeed be called a classification which has 'towering height and extreme

vastness, capable of covering the entirety of heaven.’²⁷² For this reason, in the past, it also used to cause great controversies. This kind of divine classification of the teachings will be forever adhered to by generations of Buddhist disciples. Its contribution to Buddhist teaching is not insignificant at all. Its greatness will subsist and be passed down through myriad generations.

The abovementioned five periods and eight teachings have already been completely understood. However, what remains to be answered is the question to which period and to which kind of teaching does this version of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* pertain? This *sūtra* was expounded after the *Vaipulya sūtras*, yet it constitutes a teaching which cannot be simply included into the *Great perfection of wisdom-sūtra* in 600 scrolls. It represents the practice of the profound *prajñāpāramitā*, which is not a shared Dharma, but intended to be studied only by Mahāyāna *bodhisattvas*. As such, it pertains to the distinct *Prajñā* period, while of the four modes of exposition it represents the concluding stage of the gradual teachings, and with regard to the four transformative teachings, it uses the exposition of the common and distinct to correctly explain the principles of the perfect teaching. It is therefore categorised as having the Mahāyāna mature butter taste.

(1) <i>Explaining the name</i>	Its name consists of a combination of <i>dharma</i> and metaphor (<i>fā-yu</i> 法喻)
(2) <i>Displaying the substance</i>	The substance of this <i>sūtra</i> is unsurpassed emptiness
(3) <i>Explaining the purpose</i>	This <i>sūtra</i> ’s purpose is contemplation
(4) <i>Discussing the function</i>	This <i>sūtra</i> ’s function is to destroy illusions and eliminate hindrances
(5) <i>Classifying the teaching</i>	This <i>sūtra</i> is classified as a Mahāyāna ripe butter taste teaching

TABLE 11: FIVE-SECTIONED INTERPRETATION OF THIS *SŪTRA*

²⁷² This refers to the Chinese idiom, which describes the Tiantai method as great and universal.

Endnotes

[Endnote 1] *Transforming the five aggregates into the five attributes of the Dharmakāya.* The five attributes of *dharma*-body (*fashen* 法身, Sanskrit *dharmakāya*) are the following.

Because the five kinds of Dharma virtues constitute the Dharma body, they are called the ‘five attributes of the Dharma body.’

(1) The first attribute is the body of morality (*jieshen* 戒身) the two karmic activities of the Buddha’s body and mouth,²⁷³ which are eternally free of all mistakes and wrongs, which is why it is called the Dharma body of morality.

(2) The body of meditation (*dingshen* 定身) denotes the tranquillity of the Tathāgata’s true mind, which is eternally free of all delusions and therefore called the Dharma body of meditation.

(3) The body of wisdom (*huishen* 慧身) denotes the true wisdom of perfect illumination, attaining inherent Dharma nature by means of contemplation. This is why it is called the Dharma body of wisdom (it is the fundamental wisdom).

(4) The Dharma body of liberation (*jietuoshen* 解脫身) describes the body and mind of the Tathāgata, which are liberated from all bonds of existence and are thus called the Dharma body of liberation (that is the virtue of *nirvāṇa*).

(5) The body of knowledge [and vision] gained from the experience of liberation (*jietuo zhijian shen* 解脫知見身) describes the Tathāgata’s attainment of *nirvāṇa* — liberation, the personal

²⁷³ Binzong writes: ‘*Rulai shenkou zhuyue* 如來身口諸業’. This refers to the first two ‘karmic actives’ or ‘modes’ of a Tathāgata. Otherwise, there exist ‘three karmic modes of body, speech, and mind’ (*shen-kou-yi ye* 身口意業), referred also as the ‘three karmic modes,’ *sanye* 三業 or ‘body-words-mind,’ *shen-yu-xin* 身語心. In the above text, Binzong speaks about the ‘activities of word’ and ‘activities of deed’ of a Tathāgata.

realisation of the Buddha's 'knowledge' (*zhi* 知) and the Buddha's 'vision' (*jian* 見) (knowledge pertains to the wisdom and the vision pertains to eyesight, that is nonarising wisdom and sight), which illuminates the real appearance (nature) of all *dharma*s by itself. It is therefore called the Dharma-body of knowledge and vision gained from the experience of liberation (that is the wisdom attained afterwards).

All the above listed Dharma-bodies manifest in a specific sequence — from morality to meditation, from meditation to wisdom, from wisdom to liberation, and from liberation to attainment of the body of knowledge gained from liberation. The first three obtained their name after causes, while the latter three received their name after their effects (fruits). In short, they all represent the virtues of the Buddha.

Now how can these five attributes of the Dharma-body be transformed out of the five aggregates? If all sentient beings are able to strictly observe the moral precepts, practice meditation and realize wisdom, and if they are able to practise all pure *karma*, then they will be able to transform the five aggregates of the physical body into the five attributes of the Dharma-body.

(1) The aggregate of materiality can be turned into the Dharma-body of morality — the aggregate of materiality is the body (including eyes, nose, ears, and tongue). If sentient beings are able to observe the moral precepts and prevent the arising of all *karma* of body and mouth, and thus attain bodily purity, then the moral substance is accomplished. This constitutes the transformation of the aggregate of materiality into the Dharma-body of morality.

(2) Transforming the aggregate of feeling (receiving) into the Dharma-body of meditation — the aggregate of feeling is a name describing the reception of six objects of feeling by the six sense organs. If sentient beings are able to cultivate untainted meditative concentration (*wulou chanding* 無漏禪定), then their six roots (sense organs) are all washed clean of the six sense objects (objects of feeling), so that they are able to break free from all mental afflictions and disorders. This is what constitutes the transformation of the aggregate of feeling into the Dharma body of meditation.

(3) Transforming the aggregate of mental perception into the Dharma-body of wisdom — the name aggregate of mental perception stands for the six sense objects of consciousness and thinking. If sentient beings are able to realise that all *dharma*s are illusory, then they reach the state of luminosity of intellectual consciousness. Then their awakening is self-illuminating. This constitutes the transformation of the aggregate of mental perception into the Dharma body of wisdom.

(4) Transforming the aggregate of volition into the Dharma body of liberation — the aggregate of volition is a name for creating various kinds of karmic deeds, which then turn into the bonds which bind our inherent nature. If sentient beings are able to refrain from creating all *karma*, then they will be boundless and capable to attain the state of liberation and being at ease. This represents the transformation of the aggregate of volition into the Dharma body of liberation.

(5) Transformation of the aggregate of consciousness into the body of knowledge [and vision] gained from the experience of liberation — the aggregate of consciousness means discrimination. If sentient beings can lucidly comprehend that the conscious mind only discerns between different illusional ideas, and that birth and cessation are not permanent, then nonarisen wisdom and sight arise spontaneously. This is what constitutes the transformation of the aggregate of consciousness into the body of knowledge and vision gained from the experience of liberation.

This is the Dharma-body realised by the Lesser Vehicle (Hīnayāna). It is therefore said that:

transforming the five aggregates into the five characteristics of the Dharma-body constitutes the practice of shallow *prajñā*.

[Endnote 2] *Transforming the five aggregates into the three virtues.*

The three virtues are:

(1) The virtue of the Dharma-body is the ‘original substance’ of the Buddha, which is permanent and unceasing; it is the body of the

purified Dharma-nature, which thus represents the virtue of the Dharma-body;

(2) The virtue of *prajñā* is the ‘subtle wisdom’ of the Buddha, the awakened understanding of the nature (appearance) of the real thusness of all *dharma*s. This constitutes the virtue of *prajñā*;

(3) The virtue of liberation is the ‘supreme function’ of *buddha*-hood; namely, being able to keep far away from all mental defilements and bonds. This constitutes the virtue of liberation.

Because each of these three virtues possess the four virtues of eternity, bliss, self, and purity, they are called the three virtues. In brief, the ‘Dharma-body’ is the virtue of permanent purity from defiling illusions; *prajñā* wisdom is the virtue of transcending delusions and initiating awareness; and ‘liberation’ is the virtue of being at ease and free of all bonds. Since we have already understood the principles of three virtues, we can now set out to answer what exactly is transforming the five aggregates into three virtues?

(1) Transforming the aggregate of materiality into the virtue of the Dharma-body is the boundlessness of the Buddha’s body and its intimate relatedness to the boundless virtues and solemnity, which are all transformed from the aggregate of materiality;

(2) Transformation of the aggregate of feeling into the virtue of liberation refers to the fact that the Buddha is filled with boundless, enormous, unimpeded joy of the Dharma, which is generated through the transformation of the aggregate of feeling;

(3) Transforming the aggregate of mental perception into the virtue of liberation refers to the Buddha’s omniscience, his unrestrained expositions on the Dharma, all being created by means of transformation out of the aggregate of mental perception.

(4) Transforming the aggregate of volition into the virtue of liberation refers to the Buddha’s magical powers of transformation and manifestation, his capacity to enlighten sentient beings into attaining unrestrained existence by means of the Dharma of purity, being all transformed out of the aggregate of volition.

(5) Transforming the aggregate of consciousness into the virtue of *prajñā* describes the Buddha’s perfect possession of the three kinds of wisdom, his spontaneous understanding of all *dharma*s

completely, as all being transformed out of the aggregate of consciousness.

The above are the principles of transformation of the five aggregates into the three virtues, which form a part of the state realised by Mahāyāna *bodhisattvas*. It is therefore said that:

The transformation of five aggregates into three virtues is the practice of profound perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*).

[Endnote 3] *Two kinds of birth-and-death*

- (1) Delimited *samsāra* (*fenduan shengsi* 分段生死) the character *fen* 分 is read in the falling tone, meaning delimited, the character *duan* 段 means phase. ‘Delimited’ refers to lifespan, and ‘phase’ to the materiality of the former. This term represents the life and death of ordinary people within the six destinies. Because they are reincarnated in the bodies of the six destinies, each following their own karmic causes, as a consequence of which their life spans are divided and shaped in phases (difference), their cycles of life and death are called ‘delimited *samsāra*’ (cycles of life and death). This is so because of the defilement of *karma* and the hindrances of the mental afflictions (because greed, hatred, ignorance and all other confusions disturb sentient beings’ bodies and minds they are therefore called mental afflictions; because these mental afflictions can obstruct *nirvāna* and the path towards enlightenment, they are therefore called hindrances; consequently, these things are called the hindrances of mental afflictions), which act as the supporting conditions for the perceiving of direct retributions in the six destinies of the three realms.

In the sixth scroll of the *Cheng Weishilun liaoyi deng* 成唯識論了義燈 (*Lamp of complete understanding of setting forth Consciousness-Only*) we can read as follows:

In the expression *fenduan* 分段, *fen* 分 means to delimit (*qixian* 齊限) and speaks about one’s lifetime, while *duan* 段 means distinction, that is the distinctions between the

body of five aggregates. Because all are delimited (*fen* 分) in compliance with their causes and effects, and when these are discarded, one receives the remaining differences (*duan* 段), we call it *fenduan* 分段.

- (2) Miraculously transformed *saṃsāra* (*bianyi shengsi* 變易生死) is the principle of birth and death of the sages of the Three Vehicles. It knows no superiority of form or length of lifespan. Within it, only the time of cessation of deluded thoughts is considered as death, while only the realisation of the path of sages is considered as birth. Similarly, cutting off a segment of one's ignorance and mental defilements is called death, and realising a part of the Dharma-body of the middle path is called birth (when defilements die the Dharma-body is born). On the other hand, we could also say that a time of confusion is like death and a time of awareness is like birth. This represents a discourse on birth and death in terms of movements of confusion and awakening. What is called 'transforming' (*bian* 變) causes and 'changing' (*yi* 易) effects is called [miraculously] transformed *saṃsāra*. Due to untainted *karma* and relying on cognitive hindrances — when bodily and other confusions hinder the object of knowing, this makes us unable to see the truth; it is also because of this, that the wisdom of being able to understand is also hindered and unable to arise; we therefore speak about cognitive hindrances — serve as supporting conditions for perceiving the direct retribution of purity beyond the realms [of desire, materiality, and nonmateriality]. This is the cycle of birth and death absolved from the mental afflictions of seeing and thinking, as possessed by the sages like *arhats* and above (see further the *Lion's roar of Queen Śrīmālā-sūtra* (*Shengman jing* 勝鬘經, *Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda-ekayānamahopāyavaipulya-sūtra*)).

The *Three treatises* (*Sanlun* 三論) say:

The Dharma-body attained by the sages is made divine and at ease, it can transform and change, and it is thus called 'transforming' (*bianyi* 變易).

The *Xingzong ji* 行宗記 says:

When sages transform the afflicted body of ordinary people, changing it into the unfathomable and untainted body, this is the transforming (*bianyì*).

In short, the ‘delimited’ is conditioned birth and death, which are experienced based on defiled *karma*, a direct retribution experienced by ordinary beings. The ‘transformed’ is unconditioned birth and death, which are experienced based on nondefiled *karma*, a direct retribution experienced by the sages of the Three Vehicles. The delimited are the birth and death of the physical body, while the transformed are the life and birth of the Dharma-body (in fact, the Dharma-body essentially has no birth and death; they are, moreover, present if we speak of the experience of confusion versus being awakened, and elimination versus realisation. The moments of delusion are like the death of the Dharma-body, while the moments of realisation are like the birth of the Dharma-body). The delimited is also the life and death of transmigration (*saṃsāra*), and thus pertains to suffering from our confusions, while the transformed are evolving life and death, and thus pertain to realisation and awakening.

[Endnote 4] *Misapprehensions of views and thoughts*

‘Misapprehensions of views and thoughts’²⁷⁴ is a generic term for the mental afflictions of the three realms, the roots of transmigration in three realms. Let

²⁷⁴ *Jianhuo* 見惑, meaning ‘misapprehensions associated with view’ are false impressions acquired and developed as a result of wrong views (*mithyādr̥ṣṭi*). (Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 384) further say:

These are the kinds of attachments, confused ways of thinking, and unwholesome mental states that are induced and facilitated by fallacious views and conceptions, and a failure to grasp properly the four noble truths.

Sihuo 思惑 are ‘misapprehension associated with instinctive mentation.’ They are ‘afflictions with which a person is born, also called ‘misapprehensions that arise at birth.’ The ‘misapprehensions associated with mentation’ are ingrained patterns of reacting to sensory stimuli that involve clinging, revulsion, restlessness, or confusion. In contrast to [*jianhuo*] ... *sihuo* operate at a level that is more subtle and reflective. *Jianhuo* must be

us first explain the meaning of being confused (*huo* 惑): the character *huo* 惑 means confused (*mihuo* 迷惑). But what exactly does being confused mean? When sentient beings do not understand that the self-nature of all *dharma*s is inherently empty, but instead mistakenly generate attachments, they are ‘deluded’ (*mi* 迷) in relation to truth and ‘confused’ (*huo* 惑) in relation to the correct path, to such extent that they cannot liberate themselves from the cycle of birth and death. It is therefore referred to as *huo* 惑.

- (1) Confused views (*jianhuo* 見惑), *jian* 見 means inferring. Because of mistaken views of one-sidedness, we rashly perform different kinds of reasoning, of calculating discrimination and give rise to delusions, which are called confused views. There also exists another explanation: If we separately speak about *jian* 見, it describes the six consciousnesses of a deluded mind, which irrationally ponder on and assesses all external objects, giving rise to mistaken views. These are confused views. Also, because of the confusions eliminated when seeing the path, we therefore speak about confused view.
- (2) Confused thoughts (*sihuo* 思惑), *si* 思 means confused emotions, confused emotions that arise from desire, anger, and ignorance etc., confusions which arise when we deludedly harbour the clinging of desire (*si* 思) to all objects of this world, all are called confused thoughts. There also exists another explanation, passionate clinging is called *si* 思 and describes the desire-filled, defiled attachments of the six senses (sensory organs such as the eyes, etc.) towards the six sense objects like materiality etc., while being unconsciously deluded in so doing, is termed confused thoughts. The term also refers to delusions dispelled by cultivation (*xiuhuo* 修惑), and because of the confusions eliminated in practising the way is termed delusions dispelled by cultivation.

eradicated first before one can proceed to attenuate, and eventually eradicate, *sihuo* on the path of cultivation.” (*The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, p. 819).

We ought to know that these confusions of view and thoughts [are] names established following the duality of the two aspects delusion and enlightenment. Such as, for instance, deluded views of self-attachment are called confused views, while the deluded affections of self-attachment are called confused thoughts; both terms are established on the aspect of delusion. If, for example, we observe the grades of the path (viewing truth) based on our realisation of the initial fruits, views that are cut off at that time are called confused views. What is cut off when we are cultivating the path based on the realisation of the second, third, and fourth fruit are called delusions dispelled by cultivation. All these names are established from the aspect of enlightenment. Moreover, confused views obtain their names from understanding, because they are eliminated when we see the truth at the time of realisation of initial fruits. Confused thoughts also obtain their name from cultivation, because of what is eliminated during cultivation of the path after the realisation of initial fruits, [that is] when we subsequently enter the cultivation of the path of truth.

The Dharma characteristic of the container (*jushe* 俱舍, *kośa*), as maintained in the Hīnayāna, distinguishes between the confusions of views and thoughts merely in terms of confusions of principles as opposed to confusions of things. In this way, confused views are regarded as confusions of principles, because they are given rise by being deluded about principles. On the other hand, confused thoughts are regarded as confusions about things, because they are given rise by being deluded about things. However, if we derive from *dharma* characteristics like the Consciousness-Only (*weishi* 唯識, *viññaptimātratā*) of the Mahāyāna, then the two confusions of views and thoughts are distinguished in accordance with the two categories of ‘discrimination’ (*fenbie* 分別, *vikalpa*) and ‘concurrent arising’ (*jusheng* 俱生). Thus, the hindrances of mental affliction and cognitive hindrance arisen based on discrimination are regarded as confused views; the hindrances of mental affliction and cognitive hindrance arisen based on concurrent arising are regarded as confused thoughts. Confused views pertain to discriminatory self-clinging and confused thoughts pertain to self-clinging to concurrent arising.

Essentially speaking, views of self and the mistaken views that arise out of delusions in relation to truth are called confused views. Greed, hatred etc. which arise owing to our delusions about objects are called delusions of thought. Delusions of views are the hindrance to truth, while delusions of thought are hindrances to understanding. If we wish to know the true principles of the four noble truths, we must remove our confusions of views. While, if we want to transcend the cycle of life and death of the three realms, we must annihilate our confusions of thought. In summary, confused views belong to states of delusion in our understanding, while confused thoughts belong to states of delusion in our thinking (thought conception).

In their substance, the two kinds of confusions of thought and views consist of greed and the other ten declivities (*shi shi* 十使)²⁷⁵ these are further divided into five subtler declivities (*wu lishi* 五利使) and five duller declivities (*wu dunshi* 五鈍使). When these confusions are encountered by a sharp-witted personality, such a person would always give rise to discrimination in treating objects of perception, which is why this kind of confusion is called subtler declivities. This is also the case, because this kind of confusion is easy to break in the process of cultivating the path (therefore *li* 利 means ‘easy to break’). On the other hand, those who are of duller capacity will find it difficult to break these confusions, they are called duller declivities (therefore *dun* 鈍 (dull) means ‘difficult to break’). If we combine subtler and duller declivities, we get the ten declivities. *Shi* 使 means to command, it is a synonym for mental afflictions. This is so owing to the potential of the mental afflictions of the ten declivities to command the body and mind of sentient beings into the ceaseless movement of transmigration. They can command sentient beings to create all kinds of bad *karma*, to return to the three realms and enter the cycle of rebirth. They have the potential to make sentient beings enter the three evil destinies.²⁷⁶ This is why they are called *shi* 使.

²⁷⁵ Also *shi shuimian* 十隨眠, ‘ten unwholesome mental states.’

²⁷⁶ The ‘three evil destinies’, *san edao* 三惡道 or *san equ* 三惡趣, Sanskrit *trayo durgatayah*, are the three unfortunate transmigrations, namely: (1) a being born in one of the hells, (2) as a hungry ghost, or (3) as an animal.

Let us now first explain the five subtler declivities. These include the following: (1) view of self, (2) extreme view, (3) view of clinging to rigid ascetic practices, (4) view of clinging to rigid views, and (5) mistaken views.

- (1) View of self (*shenjian* 身見), also called self-view (*wojian* 我見) or what is seen by the self (*wo suo jian* 我所見; if regarded in terms of the *dharma* of the object of meditation (*ālambana*), then it is called self-view, or what is so seen by the self, that is the subject of meditation's deluded emotions and impulses are thus called view of the self (*shenjian* 身見)). Not knowing that our self (body) is only provisionally composed out of four elements, that the five aggregates are all empty, that they are originally self-less, and thus deludedly clinging to them as our own-self (*wo* 我) is called self-view. Not being aware that all external objects, all existing things are all harmonic compositions of causes and effects, and thus illusory and unreal, while instead deludedly inferring that they are objects of the self, is called the view of objects of the self (i.e., what is thus seen by the self). If we combine self-view with what is viewed by the self we get what is called 'view of self,' namely *shenjian* 身見 or *wojian* 我見. *The Treatise of awakening of faith in the Mahāyāna* (*Dacheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論, *Mahāyāna śraddhotpāda śāstra*) reads as follows:

All evil attachments have all arisen based on self-views.

If we separate ourselves from self-views, then we are without evil attachments.

- (2) Extreme views (*bianjian* 邊見), the two extreme views are 'nihilism and eternalism' (*duanchang* 斷常). Owing to having a self, self-view arises, owing to self-view, it is absurdly believed that after death the self is annihilated, this is called the extreme view of annihilation. Or the view that after death we continue to exist forever without ever changing, which is called the eternalist view. Because they are either prejudiced towards the extreme of nihilism or eternalism, these views are called extreme views.

- (3) Views of rigid ascetic practice (*jiequ jian* 戒取見), this is to say, adopting irrational ascetic practices, as a result of which one engages in all kinds of nonbeneficial ascetic practice. That is, what is not a cause is counted as a cause, and what is not the path is counted as the path — this is like upholding a ‘heretic chicken discipline’ (studying the way of the chicken by standing on one leg) or the ‘discipline of the dog’ (studying the way of the dog by eating excrement and filth); and other teachings which maintain that being born in heaven is the cause of experiencing happiness, which is called counting noncause as cause. Or practising ascetic practices like smearing oneself with ash and fasting as a path towards enlightenment, which is the same as counting a nonpath as a right path to enlightenment. For this reason, we call these views of rigid ascetic practices.
- (4) View of clinging to rigid views (*jianqu jian* 見取見), these are views adopted with great confidence, yet at the same time due to an inferiority of wisdom. It is to count nonfruits as fruits, calling realisation what has not yet been realised, and regarding the nonfinal as the final and perfect. Such as, for example, the cultivation of the heretic practices of ordinary people, which yield but few benefits, and in truth cannot be equated to the fruits of the sages, nor are they final, but are only mistakenly regarded as such. Such views are called clinging to rigid views. As for various other kinds of inferior matters as most excellent, these kinds of views are also effects of the view of clinging to rigid views.
- (5) Mistaken views (*xiejian* 邪見), that is incorrect views. It is not believing in the three treasures of Buddhism, or denying the rule of cause and effect, and mistakenly assuming that in the entire world there exist no such things as good and bad *karma*. For this reason, evil is insufficiently feared and good is insufficiently committed to, so that one is engaged in many types of unbridled reckless behaviour, which create an unbroken stream of *karma*. In this way, one fools

oneself as well as others. These kinds of views are thus extremely wrong, which is why they are called mistaken views.

The above five views all arise because of one's delusion regarding the four noble truths and their reasoning.

Next, we shall also explain the five duller declivities:

- (1) Craving (*tan* 貪, *rāga*), that is desirous clinging. When one gives rise to craving, following one's emotions when one observes an object of desire, this is called being infatuated with and unwilling to let go of the five desires of objects from the world of sense objects.
- (2) Malice (*chen* 瞋, *vyāpāda*), this means wrath and hatred. It describes giving rise to rage towards unwanted things and predicaments, and not being able to restrain oneself. Harm inflicted by my anger can cause me great physical and mental perturbation and distress and create various kinds of evil *karma* — if it is minor it takes the form of verbal quarrels and disputes, in which people mutually blame and insult each other; if medium, the use of physical violence can escalate, injuring one's body and harming one's life; if it is major, then it takes the form of psychological conspiracies and poisonings, which can create all-consuming evils. The effect of malice is like a ferocious fire, which can burn down an entire forest of virtues and meritorious deeds. This is the most harmful of the three poisons. The classic says:

When one thought prompts anger in one's mind, a million doors of hindrance appear.

- (3) Ignorance (*chi* 痴), is the same as 'ignorance' *wuming* 無明 (*avidyā*), that is when one's mind and nature are submerged in darkness so that one is without wisdom. It is the inability to come to realise all reasons and is also referred to as not distinguishing wrong from right, not knowing good and evil, regarding the false as true, and yes as no, these are all effects of ignorance. In brief, ignorance is a kind of irrational act of blindness, which causes all mental afflictions to

come into existence. Together with the preceding two declivities it constitutes the so-called three poisons (*sandu* 三毒), because they are able to kill or severely weaken all sentient beings' Dharma-bodies, wisdom, or life.

- (4) Arrogance (*man* 慢, *māna*), is behaving in a haughty and arrogant manner, or holding oneself to be more virtuous than others. It describes harbouring in one's mind the sentiment of arrogant pride with regard to all living beings, not being able to be humble. If we speak about it from a purely scholarly perspective, then we can roughly list three different kinds of arrogance:

(1) If, for instance, another person's erudition is of the same level as mine, yet I need to explain that I am superior to them, this is called 'arrogance of self-superiority.'

(2) If, for instance, another person's erudition is slightly higher than mine, but I necessarily have to explain that I am about the same as them, then this is called 'arrogance of self-equality.'

(3) If another person's scholarly understanding is much higher than mine, yet I still want to explain that it is only slightly higher than mine, then this is called 'self-inferiority arrogance.'

Arrogance is one of the worst kinds of mentality. Its harm seems to be like a stumbling block hindering us to get closer to the good and to any knowledge. If we, for example, observe the scholars of the past and those of the present, then how many things were lost due to arrogance? These kinds of losses are beyond any counting.

- (5) Doubt (*yi* 疑, *vicikitsā*) is distrust and uncertainty. It means hesitancy, which [in our case] refers to all the facts and principles of the real. If our mind is hesitating between two things and unable to choose either of them, or if we doubt and disbelieve all good *dharma*s of the correct path. Doubt is the opposite of belief. The *sūtra* says:

Belief is the mother of the original virtue of the way, which nourishes the root of all that is good.

It further says:

The Buddhadharma is like a vast ocean, which can only be entered by faith.

Hence, the harm inflicted by doubt can make people remain forever without the chance to receive and uphold the Buddhadharma, forever unable to practise all correct paths and all good Dharma. Just observe how often the people of this world lose opportunities because of their doubts, or how many great things they do not get to know because of it. Because it incurs this kind of harm, together with the aforementioned four it constitutes the five categories of most fundamental affliction.

Let us now give a more detailed explanation of these declivities: confused views include altogether 88 declivities, that is when the ten declivities, namely the five duller and five subtler declivities, go through the three realms they turn into 88 declivities. A verse (*gāthā*) reads:

Under suffering, they are all possessed,
The arising and cessation both eliminate three.
The noble truth of the path eliminates two views,
And in the realms above one does not practise malice.

The meaning of the above verse is the following: under the truth of suffering in the realm of desire, the ten kinds of declivities are all contained within it (*ku xia ju yiqie* 苦下具一切). The noble truths of the arising and cessation of suffering will eliminate the three declivities of ‘view of self,’ ‘extreme views,’ and ‘ascetic practices,’ so that only seven declivities will remain (*ji mie ge chu san* 集滅各除三). As for the noble truth of the path, it only eliminates the two declivities of the ‘view of self’ and ‘extreme views,’ so that afterwards eight declivities are left (*daodi chu er jian* 道諦除二見). Since the truth of suffering entails the ten declivities, origination and cessation both possess seven, and the truth of the path eight, this gives altogether 32 declivities. Originally the upper two realms also both contain 32 declivities (the realm of materiality 32 and the nonmaterial realm 32), but because they have no mind of malice, therefore, under the four noble truths one has to remove four angers from each of them — four declivities, as a consequence of which each realm has only 28 declivities. Thus, the two

realms together have only 56 declivities, which together with the 32 declivities of the realm of desire gives 88.

Secondly, there are also altogether 81 types (*pin* 品) of confusion of thought. They combine the four declivities of craving, malice, ignorance and arrogance as one type, which undergoes the nine lands of the three realms — the four *Dhyāna* heavens and the four earthly lands of the realm of materiality, the four Emptiness heavens and four lands of the formless realm, and the five realms of cohabitation in the realm of desire, constitute one single earthly realm; consequently, this gives altogether nine earthly realms, each one of which contains nine types; nine times nine yields 81 types.

The above 88 declivities of confusion of sight and the 81 types of confusion of thought represent the most fundamental affliction of birth and death in the three realms. Because the Hīnayāna aspires to transcend birth and death in the three realms, its followers must invest their entire lifetime in trying to eliminate these two kinds of confusion of sight and thought, or else one is not able to attain one's ultimate objective. The sequence of elimination is as follows: at the level when one first sees the path, one generates untainted wisdom (*wulou zhi* 無漏智), gaining a profound insight into the principles of the supreme truth. When, in a single instant, one can thus eliminate the 88 declivities of the three realms, this is called the initial fruit of a stream enterer. When we, in turn, eliminate the six kinds of confusion of thought of the realm of desire, this is called the second fruit of the once-returner. Subsequently, eliminating the nine kinds of confusion of thought in the realm of desire is called the third fruit of the nonreturner. When in turn one is able to eliminate the eight earthly realms of the two higher realms, the 72 types of the confusions of thought, then together with the nine types of the preceding realm of desire, we have completely eliminated all 81 types of confusion of thought in the three realms. This is then called the fourth fruit of the *arhat*.

[Endnote 5] *The five flavours metaphor:*

The 'Noble practices' chapter of the *Nirvāṇa -sūtra* contains a metaphor, which says: initially, from a cow we can obtain the flavour of milk, in turn

we create the flavour of cream, the flavour of fresh butter, the flavour of ripe butter, and finally the flavour of refined *ghee*. These five flavours are exactly like the sequence of the Buddha's original teaching of Dharma — he first expounded the principles of the *Avatamsaka*, then the *Āgama*, *Vaipulya*, *Prajñā*, and lastly the *Lotus* and *Nirvāṇa*. This is the reason why the Tiantai school uses the five flavours to match the five periods.

(1) The flavour of milk — 'milk' is first obtained from a cow. Not having undergone refinement, its flavour is strong and concentrated, a metaphor for the great Dharma unable to be understood by the students of lesser capacity — just as the *śrāvaka* at the assembly were unable to understand the great Dharma. As mentioned above, this was the situation in which, although having ears being unable to hear the perfect sudden teaching. Therefore, the *Avatamsaka* period is compared to the flavour of milk.

(2) The flavour of cream — 'cream' is the mild taste of milk, after it has already been refined. It is thus a metaphor for the expediency of the Two Vehicles — just as a small child can inherit the sense of taste, the *Āgama* period is therefore likened to the flavour of cream.

(3) The flavour of fresh butter — 'fresh butter' is cream which has undergone one more round of refinement, so that its flavour has already gradually becoming more intense. This gradual increase in strength is a metaphor for the gradual entrance into the great Dharma of the Two Vehicles' members of lesser capacity. Therefore, the *Vaipulya* period is likened to the flavour of fresh butter.

(4) The flavour of ripe butter — when butter is refined for another time its flavour grows more intense, this resembles the stage when the lesser capacities of the followers of the Two Vehicles are already gradually turning into greater capacities. Some of them have already started to show hope that they will be able to carry on the responsibility of upholding the Tathāgata's family business of the Mahāyāna (Major Vehicle) — this resembles the process of a small child gradually approaching maturity, so that soon they will be able to inherit the family business. Therefore, the *Prajñā* period is compared to the flavour of ripe butter.

(5) The flavour of refined *ghee* — to obtain 'refined *ghee*,' we have to submit the butter to the final round of careful refinement, so that

we can obtain a pure and noncomplex flavour. This is a metaphor for the process of the Tathāgata's liberation of sentient beings already having reached the stage, when his disciple's characters and capacities have reached complete maturity, to the extent that they are now able to take over the Tathāgata's family enterprise — this resembles the eldest son's coming of age, so that he can now be handed over the family business. Therefore, the *Lotus* period is likened to the refined *ghee* flavour. This is a very fitting comparison indeed.

Postscript

It is indeed true that the coming into existence of all things and phenomena in this world does not go beyond the two words ‘causes’ and ‘effects.’ When it comes to that, one does not have to discuss anything else. Let us now cast some light on the causes and effects behind the story of publication of these words.

In the second month of the year 30 of the Republic (1941), I responded to the invitation of the Zhaiming monastery, in Daxi village at Mount Fufen, to deliver some of the lectures in this volume of the *Heart of perfection of wisdom-sūtra*. On the third day of the Buddhist assembly ultimately held at the monastery, I had just finished lecturing on the word *prajñā* in the title of the *sūtra*. When I was preparing to proceed with an explanation of the term *pāramitā*, the abbot of the monastery, Master Xiaozong, suddenly approached me accompanied by the layman Zeng Qiutao and others. The abbot then made the following request:

Taiwan is still short of occasions on which Buddhist *sūtras* would be explained and lectured upon. These days one rarely hears the Buddhadharma and the teaching here is still at a great disadvantage. It is thus very fortunate, to witness the Master lecturing with such a distinctive charm at this unprecedented Dharma assembly today. Although the audience present at this lecture are listening to your talk with great enthusiasm and focused attention, I am afraid that they do not understand completely what you are saying. They are thus unable to get the complete benefit of grasping the content of your lecture, which escapes them like wind passing by their ears. Could I thus share with the Master a piece of earnest and well-meaning advice? Even though the monks have been taking notes from your lecture, most of what you have said has been left out, leaving the records far from complete. May I venture if, harbouring in mind the enlightenment of the later generations of scholars, the Master would be so kind as to go into the great difficulties of writing down each day’s lectures into notes, which could then be copied and

distributed amongst the members of the audience. This would enable us all to read the text while listening to your lectures, making it much easier for us to comprehend its content and derive from it as much benefit as possible. What does the Master think about this humble proposal?

Although I initially hesitated, I soon came to the conclusion that my duty was to roll up my sleeves for the sake of contributing to the Dharma benefiting the masses. I thus agreed to do so. It was only unfortunate that I did not carry reference material with me. But since I had already given my commitment, I knew that I could not avoid doing it in the end. Thereupon, I suddenly forgot about my inferiority and invested my entire mind and thoughts into this undertaking, in which I have gradually transferred from the field of eight consciousnesses everything I have learned in my entire lifetime. One thing after another, I slowly searched and extracted from my memory, using this faulty handwriting, which I have not used for such a long time, until finally everything has been set down on paper. In my manuscript I have first explained the eight characters, *bore boluomiduo xin jing* 般若波羅密多心經, that constitute the title of the *sūtra*. I have then set out to expound on its content using the method of five-sectioned classification (Table 11), pointing out the essential points of the entire *sūtra*. In turn, I then introduced the translator, outlining his history, in order to make the reader aware of the virtues and merits of the Dharma Master, who translated this version of the *sūtra*. Subsequently, I turned to the main text of the *sūtra*, which I endeavoured to explain using a double manner of explanation: I first gave an ‘analytic explanation,’ in which I briefly commented on and elaborated on the main points of the *sūtra*. In turn, I also provided a ‘synthetic explanation,’ in which I relayed the exact meaning of the parts of text under consideration. Whether shallow or deep, detailed or concise, the main aim of my explanation was to make it accessible to a common readership. Thus, during the day I was delivering my lecture, while at night I was trying to write down the content of the lecture. I then asked my apprentice to focus on transcribing the manuscript using the seal of the mind and the mind of enlightenment. After more than ten days had passed, the Dharma assembly was completed, and the teaching materials were completed. From the start on, I regarded the entire undertaking as a play I joined just for fun, not having dared to judge

its overall quality or appearance. Later, having been persuaded from all sides, I hastily sent the manuscript to the press and into circulation. So I could not change my mind about it. It thus came to pass that, all of a sudden, the manuscript had already been published. These were the causes and effects behind its first publication.

Later, in the sixth month of the year 41 of the Republic (1952), Mr Xu Kesui, the owner of the Ruicheng Publishing Company in Taichung, and Mr Liang Dongliang wrote me a letter together, in which they informed about their intention to reprint the manuscript of my unworthy work (*Sūtra on the heart of the Perfection of Wisdom: the essential explanation*). At that time, I was of the opinion that since the present teaching script had been written in the time of the Japanese occupation of Taiwan, it had been profoundly influenced by the imperialist system, which is why the manner of its argumentation and thought could not have been free and unrestricted, in order to cope with the nature of the then current circumstances. Therefore, some sentences, which could be found in certain parts of this book had already become unsuitable for the current times and required some necessary revisions. Originally, I only intended to revise those parts of the text which were not in line with the nature of the times. Later, however, following repeated requests from some of my disciples, the text has been modified into a modern literary form. Consequently, in order to somewhat enrich its content, I have decided to apply some changes to the arrangement of ideas, adding a few new ideas, and modifying certain parts of the text.

To my great embarrassment, although, originally, I had promised the Ruicheng Publishing Company to hand out the final manuscript within a week, however, to my surprise the undertaking turned out to be too heavy for my scant virtues. Unfortunately, when one third of the new manuscript had been written, I was suddenly stricken by a serious illness. Because I was suffering from high blood pressure, I was thus unable to continue with my work, and was thus forced to lay down my pen.

No long afterwards, I received a letter from Zhu Fei, the editor-in-chief of the *Bodhi tree* (*Putishu* 菩提樹), in which he inquired whether I would be prepared to publish the already finished part of the manuscript with them.

For the benefit of the reader, I implored them to act on my behalf and ask the Ruicheng Publishing Company for consent. As a result, the already finished part of the manuscript was published, part by part, in the *Bodhi tree*. Later, I received many letters from the Ruicheng Publishing Company, in which they implored me to send them the manuscript, claiming that so many people had already pre-ordered copies, which is why the book had to be sent into print as soon as possible. I ended up extremely sorry for having delayed the publication of the book because I was unable to master my illusory human body. Although I have tried several times to pull myself together in dedication to the Dharma, and finally complete the book, my illness did not agree. In the end I was not only unable to do so, but instead only managed to increase my blood pressure. I could not refrain from crying out the desperate “Why, oh why are you making it so hard for me to make my wish come true”! Later, when my illness had no better option but to somewhat lessen its grip on me, I started stealthily writing at first five characters and then ten characters; from writing one sentence at a time, I slowly went over to write tens and then hundreds of characters. In this way, resembling an accountant, I finally managed to compile this extremely shallow and superficial script, making a great fool out of myself. It is namely beyond doubt that things written when suffering from an illness are bound to contain many overlooked aspects and mistakes. This is what I consider most regrettable. It is my great hope that all great scholars, who read this manuscript, will not hesitate to offer their criticism

Postscript written by the author, in the South Tiantai Prajñā Temple
(南天台般若 *Nan Tiantai bore*) 1954 (year 43 of the Republican Era)

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Commentary structure

- A1** Title (p. 23)
 - A2** Translator (p. 67)
 - A3** Main commentary (p. 78)
 - B1 Exoteric explanation of *prajñā* (p. 78)**
 - C1** A general explanation of cultivation and attainment (p. 78)
 - D1** Illuminating the one able to see (p. 78)
 - D2** Explaining what is being practised (p. 93)
 - D3** Explaining the object of contemplation (p. 99)
 - D4** Explaining the benefits derived (p. 119)
 - C2** Explanation of the true meaning of emptiness of *prajñā* (p. 130)
 - D5** Extinguishing grasping (p. 130)
 - D6** Revealing the true nature of things (p. 146)
 - D7** Tripartite way of dispelling illusions (p. 152)
 - E1** Three aspects of refuting the notion of self (p. 152)
 - F1** Refuting the five aggregates (p. 152)
 - F2** Refuting the 12 sense bases (p. 156)
 - F3** Refuting the 18 elements (p. 164)
 - E2** Refuting differences of the Two Vehicles (p. 172)
 - F4** *Pratyekabuddhas* (p. 172)
 - F5** *Śrāvakas* (p. 199)
 - E3** Refuting the differences of the expedient (p. 225)
 - D8** The duality of the fruits of realisation (p. 234)
 - E4** Understanding a *bodhisattva*'s attainment (p. 234)
 - E5** Understanding the Buddha's attainment (p. 256)
 - B2 Esoteric evocation of *prajñā* (p. 269)**
 - C3** On its names and benefits (p. 269)
 - C4** Reciting the text of the mantra (p. 276)
- Conclusion (p. 283) and Endnotes (p. 332)

TABLE 12: OVERVIEW OF COMMENTARY STRUCTURE

*A suggestion:
new readers may find it helpful to begin reading at section A3 (page 49)
and return to read the earlier details later.*